The Scribal Art of Textual Transmission:
A Study of Fifteenth-Century Manuscript Tradition
in Nineteen Manuscripts Containing Selected Canterbury Tales

By

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Although studies on the art of the Canterbury Tales
abound and textual criticism has examined all eighty-three
manuscripts in which the Canterbury Tales occurs in whole
or in part, there has been no systematic study relating the
scribal processes and manuscript tradition involved in each
manuscript to the art of the Canterbury Tales. This disser-
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manuscripts which contain selected Canterbury tales, all re-
maining manuscripts being either fragments or relatively com-
plete texts.

The first three chapters focus on scribal processes and
their artistic effects. In Chapter I three basic types of
textual transmission, transcriptive, memorial, and improvi-
sational, are distinguished in the continuum of scribal

processes. From the control group of nineteen manuscripts containing selected Canterbury tales an example of each type of textual transmission is represented and examined to determine the artistic consequences of its mode of transmission.

Two additional examples of improvisational transmission, each different in degree from that shown in Chapter I, are examined in Chapter II, entitled "From Print to Script" because its two texts are likewise examples of a common late fifteenth-century manuscript tradition, the textual transmission from book to manuscript.

Chapter III, "The Act of Significant Omission," focuses on a type of improvisational transmission which selects, omits, and abbreviates its texts both on a large and a small scale.

Chapter IV, "Selected Tales: 'In Sondry Wyse of Sondry Folk,'" shifts emphasis from the scribal processes of textual transmission to the products of these processes, the selected Canterbury tales in their various textual states. Each of the selected tales is examined in its one or more textual transmissions to determine how the particular scribal processes employed in copying each text effect different tellings of that tale, somewhat as the various performances of a musical piece effect different renditions or interpretations of its basic score. The most obvious conclusion resulting

from this analysis is that by the very fact of their excerpting tales for inclusion in compilations the scribes do not consider the Canterbury Tales as an inviolable organic whole. Nor does any one of the scribes excerpting tales sense any dramatic principle. They do, however, both in their textual transmissions and in the contexts of the compilations indicate a sense of other unities, other principles of order and arrangement, other interpretive concerns.

The subject of Chapter V, "'The Hoole Book,'" is the sum product of scribal processes, the complete manuscript compilation. A survey of the basic configurations of the nineteen manuscripts in this study shows the great variety of organization in fifteenth-century manuscript books and suggests that the various compilations into which any one text has been transmitted can give multiple perspectives on its importance as well as its meaning.

The concluding "Retraction" is less an abjuring than simply a drawing back to place in the larger perspective of Chaucerian scholarship the significance of this study. While attention to the scribal art of textual transmission offers a limited positive contribution to the study of the meaning and art of Chaucer's masterwork, it does serve as a much needed corrective to interpretations of the Canterbury Tales which are products either of a modern sensibility or an over-

imaginative, vicariously recreated medieval sensibility and which rely too little on the realities of literary production in a manuscript tradition.

PROLOGUE

Studies on the art of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> are by far
most numerous in current Chaucer research. Least numerous,
not only in current Chaucer research but in medieval studies
in general, are studies of scribal processes and manuscript
tradition. Information in these matters is usually gleaned
from sections of introductions to Chaucer Society texts,
Early English Text Society publications, dissertations,
textual editions of medieval literature, occasional articles,
and footnotes in any study that bases itself on the manu-
scripts of a text.

The eighty-three manuscripts of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>
have been used primarily for establishing a critical text
and theorizing about the order, history, and development of
the tales. Occasionally the individual manuscripts them-
selves have received attention for their striking variants
or unique readings--in other words, for their own artistic
worth.

John M. Manly and Edith Rickert have assembled the
greatest amount of information on the eighty-three

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manuscripts which they used in their 1940 critical edition, <u>The Text of the Canterbury Tales Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts</u>. There has not, however, been any systematic study relating the scribal processes and manuscript tradition involved in each manuscript to the art of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>. This dissertation initiates such an approach by examining the nineteen manuscripts which contain selected Canterbury tales, all remaining manuscripts being either fragments or relatively complete texts. Often aesthetic approaches to interpreting the art of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> rely too little on textual and contextual evidence while textual approaches fail to draw out the aesthetic implications of scribal processes in transmitting texts and compiling them in manuscript books. The stereoscopic view of this study attempts to avoid the over-elaborations of artistic interpretations based too much on a hypothetical text and too little on the medieval context of book production, as well as to avoid the insufficient use of textual information concerning scribal processes, manuscript tradition, and their aesthetic implications.

The first three chapters of this study focus on scribal processes and their artistic effects. In Chapter I three basic types of textual transmission, transcriptive, memorial, and improvisational, are distinguished in the continuum of

scribal processes. From the control group of nineteen manuscripts containing selected Canterbury tales an example of each type of textual transmission is represented and examined to determine its aesthetic consequences. Two additional examples of improvisational transmission, each different in degree from that shown in Chapter I, are examined in Chapter II, entitled "From Print to Script" because its two texts are likewise examples of a common late fifteenth-century manuscript tradition, the textual transmission from book to manuscript. Chapter III, "The Art of Significant Omission," focuses on a type of improvisational transmission which selects, omits, and abbreviates its texts both on a large and a small scale.

Chapter IV, "Selected Tales: 'In Sondry Wyse of Sondry Folk,'" shifts emphasis from the scribal processes of textual transmission to the products of these processes, the selected Canterbury tales. Each of the selected tales is examined in its one or more textual transmissions to determine how the particular scribal processes employed in copying each text effect a different telling of the tale, somewhat as the various performances of a musical score effect different renditions or interpretations of a basic text.

The subject of Chapter V, "'The Hoole Book,'" is the sum product of scribal processes, the manuscript compilation.

A survey of the basic configurations of the nineteen manuscripts in this study shows the extreme variety of organization in fifteenth-century manuscript books and suggests that the various compilations into which any one text has been transmitted can give multiple perspectives on its importance as well as its meaning. The concluding "Retraction" is less an abjuring or taking back than simply a drawing back to place in the larger perspective of Chaucerian scholarship the significance of this study.

Since familiarity with the _Canterbury Tales_ and its manuscript tradition is presupposed, only those features of each manuscript description which are relevant to this study are mentioned. Further, the common abbreviations found in Robinson's corrected second edition and in the Manly-Rickert edition for both the individual Canterbury tales and the manuscripts containing them are employed throughout.

THREE TYPES OF TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION

The great textual critics of medieval literature, such
as Lachmann, Bédier, Moore, Pasquali, Vinaver, and Sisam,
have made invaluable contributions toward the study of manu-
script tradition.[1] Names such as Skeat, Manly, and Rickert
are inseparable from the texts which they have established.
More recently, Professor George Kane has completed an
edition of the A-text of _Piers Plowman_ which has been hailed
as a triumph of textual criticism. As manifested by these
scholars, the major trend of textual criticism is toward
the establishment of a text most representative of an
"author's" original, often called the presumptive archetype.

Though the textual critics have agreed in their common
goal of establishing authoritative texts, they have varied
in their methods of arriving at such texts. Three broad
approaches to the editing of texts can be distinguished.
The exact reproduction of one manuscript is the method
exemplified in Thomas Wright's 1847-1851 edition of the
Canterbury Tales, as well as in the numerous printed texts

of the Chaucer Society. A second method of editing is the
building-up of a composite or eclectic text as in Skeat's
edition of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>. The third editorial pro-
cedure results in what is called a critical text. In such
a text based on all the manuscripts available, substantive
emendations are made on the authority of each reading in
the light of a genealogical pattern of manuscript tradition
as well as in view of the textual processes of transmission
which yielded such a genealogy.

The two critical editions most important for the
present study are Manly-Rickert's <u>The Text of the Canterbury</u>
<u>Tales Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts</u> and
George Kane's <u>Piers Plowman: the A-Version; Will's Visions</u>
<u>of Piers Plowman and Do-Well; An Edition in the Form of</u>
<u>Trinity College Cambridge MS. R.3.14 Corrected from Other</u>
<u>Manuscripts, with Variant Readings</u>.[2] Both editions provide
a wealth of information about scribal processes; both offer
a similar abundance of apparatus in order to check their
respective texts; both printed from one manuscript with
indicated emendations from all other available manuscripts.
However similar these editions are in effective contents,
their differences are significant and may well indicate a
new trend in textual criticism. Manly and Rickert edit in
terms of the genealogical process, heeding the critics of

that method and avoiding many pitfalls of the genealogical
method by a strict fidelity to their manuscripts' details
and the limits which these details impose. Kane's edition
of Piers Plowman: the A-Version is based on "the conclusion
that knowledge of the scribal tendencies of substitution
was a better instrument for determining originality with
these manuscripts than recension based upon a dubious
genealogical hypothesis."[3] Kane, therefore, proceeds to
establish a text informed primarily by a knowledge of the
scribal processes of textual transmission. Yet, since he
purposes specifically to produce a critical edition, he
admits, " . . . I had not reached the position described by
Greg where 'the relation of the manuscripts ceases to be of
any interest whatever.'"[4]

The observable trend from Manly-Rickert to Kane is to-
ward less hypothesizing in terms of a genealogy, more at-
tention to scribal variants, and consequently more apprecia-
tion of each manuscript for itself than for any relation it
might have to a presumptive archetype or original. While
earlier textual criticism stresses the individual talent of
authorship and establishes a text as faithful as possible
to the original, more recent textual criticism points toward
a fuller consideration of medieval literary tradition and
the scribal processes of manuscript book production which

promote a fluidity of text. Both emphases of early and recent textual criticism are necessary to a balanced appreciation of that special existence of medieval literature in a chirographic culture.

While textual criticism has paid increasing attention to the processes of scribal transmission and their unique products, the individual manuscripts, literary criticism has developed a rather elaborate analysis of both processes and products of oral transmission. Since Milman Perry's conception of an oral-formulaic theory of composition, numerous studies have analyzed its application to medieval poetry.[5] In a most recent review of the development of the oral-formulaic theory and its application to medieval poetry, Alan Jabbour has offered a sound correction to the theory's advocates who overemphasized the element of improvisation.[6] Regretting the limitations of the only two theories of transmission of Old English poetry, namely, that "it was orally improvised, or that it represents a period when written compositions continued to utilize oral techniques,"[7] Jabbour exposes what he calls the "recent and somewhat irregular" fault of identifying oral with improvisational. As he clearly explains, "Folklorists have long recognized the presence, to a greater or lesser degree, of stability as well as variation, and of memory as well as improvisation

in the oral transmission of poetry."[8]

The remainder of Jabbour's article, "Memorial Transmission in Old English Poetry," identifies and gives "evidence to weigh in the balance" for three basic types of oral tradition which lend clarification to the three types of manuscript tradition that are identified and discussed in this chapter. Briefly summarized, the three types of oral tradition are:

1) Improvisational: A "text" wherein the variants are related only in subject-matter and have no discernible history of word-for-word or phrase-by-phrase transmission.[9]

2) Memorial: A "text" wherein the variants show a history of word-for-word or phrase-by-phrase oral transmission from a known or presumed archetype.

3) Transitional: A "text" which, though appropriated from written into memorial tradition, has not yet been subjected to the full gamut of traditional modifications and remains close to its written exemplar."[10]

It is important to note that these types of oral tradition are not mutually exclusive categories but broad areas of distinction in the total range of oral transmission

processes. Thus, Jabbour states that it is more accurate to describe a given type as primarily improvisational or primarily memorial.

Consideration must also be given to two types of oral tradition which Jabbour prefers to classify in the lettered tradition[11] because of their written basis rather than their oral delivery. The simpler type is memorized transmission which represents the oral delivery of a memorized text, distinct from the transitional or memorial transmission in degree rather than in kind. The second type, called a "transitional" class by the "advocates of compromise," represents "texts which are composed pen in hand along the lines of an oral style" and read, recited, or sung aloud to an audience.[12]

Analysis of the processes of scribal transmission in the light of the basic types of oral transmission yields the identification of three basic types of transmission in the lettered or manuscript tradition. The first and simplest type is transcriptive: it produces a text wherein the variants are primarily due to mechanical errors, due to the misconstruction of grammar or sense, or due to a change of "dialect, construction, tense, mood or number, word order, and vocabulary equivalents, which do not materially alter the substance of the communication in any way now determinable."[13]

A second and least frequent type of scribal transmission is memorial: it produces a text wherein omission, compression, expansion, and dislocation of matter is attributable to operations of the memory in absence of the copy-text. This type of scribal transmission is not to be confused with the mechanical error of unconscious substitution prompted by memory in the transcriptive type of transmission.[14] Its variants are significantly different in their alteration of the text on a larger scale and to little advantage.

The third and most interesting type of scribal transmission is improvisational: it produces a text wherein the variants are attributable to deliberate substitution according to typical scribal responses to copy.[15] Improvisational transmission in the lettered tradition produces a large variety of textual renditions ranging from minor versions designed for more explicit or more emphatic presentation to major recensions reflecting editorial censorship, reinterpretation for a different time and place, or reworking into a different genre. In its fullest expression improvisational transmission produces conflated or compiled texts which make of two copy-texts a third and new text reworked to become of independent significance in the literary tradition.

The purpose of this chapter is to furnish evidence from the control group of nineteen <u>Canterbury Tales</u> manuscripts for the existence of each of the three types of textual transmission and to consider the critical issues involved in each scribal rendition of one of the most popular works of medieval literature.

British Museum MS. Additional 10340 (Ad^4)[16] is a slim Chaucer collection of only forty-three folios. It is significant for being among the oldest Chaucer manuscripts (ca. 1400).[17] Its text of Chaucer's translation of Boethius' <u>Consolation of Philosophy</u> was the first to be edited by EETS,[18] only later to be superseded by Cambridge MS. Ii.3.21, which is now used as the standard text.[19] In its text of "Truth," Ad^4 is singular for its inclusion of the unique copy of the Envoy; it, too, serves as the poem's standard text.[20] What is of moment here, however, is its memorial text of the Parson's description from the <u>General Prologue</u>. No one has really doubted that this text is written from memory.[21] What is significant, however, and yet unexamined, are the differences that appear because of memorial transmission and the light which these differences shed upon our understanding of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>.[22]

Evidence of the memorial transmission of this text is abundant in its omissions, compressions, and dislocations

of material. These characteristics of the transmitted text,
together and on a large scale, indicate a memorial process
rather than improvisation according to any given scribal
habits of revision. First, the text of Ad[4]'s excerpt from
the <u>General Prologue</u>:[23]

```
478 There was a pore person of a toune
477 And was a good man of religioune
479 Holy he was boþe in þou3t and werk
480 Therto he was a lered man a clerk
481-4 om.
 491 Were hys parisshe housed neuer so far a sonder
 492 He lafte neiþer for reynes ne for þonder
 494/493 The ferrest in hys parische/to visite
 490 He couþe haue suffisaunce in þing ful lite
486 Ful loþe was hym to cursen for his tyþes
485 And so he was yproued ofte syþtes
487-9 om.
495 Thus wolde he walke and in hys hande a staf
496 This noble ensample into hys shepe he 3af
497 That fyrst he wrou3t and afterward he tau3t
498 Out of þe gospel he þo wordes rau3t
 507 He lete nau3t hys benefice to hyre
 508 And lete hys shepe emcombred in þe myre
 509 Ne ran to london vnto seynt poules
 510 To getyn hym a chauntery for soules
 511 Oþer wiþ a breþerhede to be wiþholde
 512 But duelt at home and he kept hys owne fold
 513 So þat þe wolf ne made it nat myskary
 514 He was a shepherde and nat a mercenary
499 And þis figure he added eke þerto
500 That if gold rust what shal yren do
501 For 3if a prest be foule on whom we trust
502 No wonder is a lewed man to rust
503 For it is a foule þing who so take kepe
504 A sheten shepherd and a clene shepe
505-6 om.
515-24 om.
525 He wayted after no pompe ne reuerence
526 Ne made hym a spiced conscience
527 But cristis lore and hys apostles tweue
528 He tau3t but first he folwed it hym selue.
```

A comparative chart of the lines and verse paragraphs of Ad^4 and the M-R text of the Parson's description reveal at a glance their major differences:[24]

Verse Para-graphs of M-R Text	Lines	Subject
1.	477-485	parson's general virtues
2a.	486-490	his poverty & charity
2b.	491-495	his visitations
3.	496-506	his good example
4.	507-514	a true shepherd--no mercenary
5.	515-523	his humility & sense of equality
6.	525-528	conclusion: his Christlikeness

Verse Paragraphs of Ad^4	Lines
1.	478-480 (om. 481-484)
2b.	491-490
2a.	486-485 (om. 487-489)
2b-3.	495-498
4.	507-514
3.	499-504 (om. 505-506)
(5.)	(om. 515-524)
6.	525-528

Besides the four major omissions indicated by parentheses, two other significant omissions occur because of another characteristic feature of memorial transmission, namely, the dislocation of matter. In line 479 the loss of "rich" involves also the loss of a consequent contrast with "poor" of line 478, perhaps due to the transposition of lines 477-478 which more likely correspond to a memorial recall

and description of subject than to the logical gener-
al-to-particular movement of the standard text. The other
omission is also of contrasting pairs and is due not only
to a transposition but also to a compression of lines.
Lines 493-494 are compressed by yoking the first part of
line 494 to the end of line 493, omitting the complementary
asperities ("In siknesse nor in meschief") which still do
not prevent the Parson from his pastoral care, and omitting
the contrasting social classes ("much and lite") whom the
Parson visits without discrimination and who are later
mentioned (line 522--though also omitted in the memorial
transmission) in a contrasting pastoral duty of correction.

Examples of greater dislocation of textual matter both
with and without concomitant omission occur, as indicated
by the illustrative chart, in the transposition of the "a"
and "b" parts of the second verse paragraph. Another dis-
location is the separation of line 495 from its thought
context of parish visitation and its placement after the
transposed couplet (486-485) which, with the preceding line
490, is all that remains of the 2a. section on the Parson's
poverty and charity. In a similar but less complex manner,
verse paragraph 3. on the Parson's good example and teaching
is split by the dislocation of verse paragraph 4. on the
Parson as no mercenary but a true shepherd.

The aesthetic consequences of such a major rearrangement of matter is a loss of coherence both on large and small scales. The loss of three couplets which serve as riming transitions leaves the transitions which remain between the rearranged verse paragraphs abrupt and disjunct. The couplet of lines 523-524 is completely omitted. The two other couplets remain as rimes but lose their function as transitions. The couplet of lines 485-486 is transposed and exists as a self-contained verse paragraph rather than the couplet's original function as the last and first lines of two separate verse paragraphs. The couplet of lines 495-496 loses its transitional function with the further loss of coherence in that line 495 is dislocated from what remained of its original verse paragraph in lines 491-493 and stands as an incoherent first line to the memorial text's verse paragraph (lines 495-498) on the Parson's good example.

Besides loss of coherence and the abrupt transitions noted in the previous discussion of the greater omissions and dislocations of textual matter there is the incoherence created within the verse paragraphs. The best example of this is the memorial text's treatment of verse paragraph 2b. (ll. 491-495), itself split up, as discussed earlier, by having its last line dislocated. The four lines that remain

are compressed to three, and a fourth line is misremembered
from what was originally a line in the previous verse para-
graph 2a.[25] The first lack of coherence results simply
from a misremembered line. Instead of the original "Wyd
was his parisshe and houses fer asonder" (491), the scribe
has remembered "Were hys parisshe housed neuer so far a
sonder," confusing the distinct notions of a large parish
with parishioners spaced far apart and literally stating
the idea of a parish existing in diversely scattered areas.
The second loss of coherence is both more disruptive and
more interesting. In the transposed and compressed memo-
rial transmission of lines 493-494, the phrase "much and
lite" which included the rime for "visite" was omitted.
This rime-word, however, seems to have triggered the memory
of the same word used in line 490 of the previous verse
paragraph which is incompletely remembered in the memorial
text. The misremembered line, "He koude in litel thyng
haue suffisaunce," becomes "He couþe haue suffisaunce in
þing ful lite," providing the necessary rime and perhaps
the reminder of verse paragraph 2a. which follows in dimin-
ished form.

On the smallest scale, this memorially transmitted
text is responsible for three unique variants--of no use
textually but of critical interest in determining the

quality and value of memorial transmission. In line 507

"lete" replaces "sette," an emphasis on the passive rather

than the active aspect of hiring benefices, and yet a

repetition of the same word used in the next line. Next,

in line 512 imagination interpolates into the memorial

transmission supplying "owne" to add the emphasis of

pastoral possessiveness in contrast to mercenary wolfishness.

Finally, in line 503 the memorial transmission extends the

warning from what was only the class of priests to all "who

so take kepe." Also, instead of the abstract "shame" which

the warning attributes to "a sheten shepherde and a clene

sheep" (504), the memory enlivened perhaps by the imagina-

tion substitutes "For it is a foule þing," adding to the

visual an olfactory image of shame.

In comparison with a transcriptive text, a memorially

transmitted text is of less literary value, lacking the

former's logical order and coherence, its more sophisticated

transitional devices, and its complete subject matter. Yet,

in its own right, as a product of the memory in search of

an important text, this memorial transmission of the

Parson's description possesses an admirable rendition with

no serious faults in what it does transmit and with some

few unique variants which are attractive glosses to the

standard text. Considered in the entire manuscript context

of Ad^4, the memorial transmission of the Parson's descrip-
tion together with "Truth," both in parallel columns suc-
ceeding Chaucer's translation of Boethius, serve as verse
exemplum and cautionary lyric postscripts to some of the
highlighted themes of the philosophical treatise. Here the
Parson's role as an exemplar of philosophical wisdom in
action is not unlike his role as representative of religious
wisdom in action, both in his general description and in
his tale, itself a religious treatise.

In contrast to the rare occurrences of memorial trans-
mission in the Canterbury Tales are the all-pervasive in-
stances of transcriptive and improvisational transmission.
As is obvious, the manuscript tradition deals primarily
with manuscripts and it is, above all, from the scrutiny of
scribal habits in copying and transmitting texts that an
understanding of the manuscript tradition emerges and with
it an increased appreciation of the literary tradition which
it preserves and transmits.

A comparative textual analysis of two Canterbury Tales
manuscripts, Cambridge University MS. Kk.1.3 (Kk) and
British Museum MS. Harley 1704 (Hl^1), provides a clear
contrast between the transcriptive and the improvisational
types of transmission. Both texts are found in diachronic
miscellanies, specifically, compilations in verse and prose

copied over a period of time from the fourteenth to seven-
teenth centuries and ranging in subject matter from copy
book verses and drawings through political and legal forms
to religious and didactic topics.[26] Both Kk's leaf of
seventy lines (B1650-1719) and Hl[1]'s complete rendition of
237 lines are transmissions by one hand, each of the
Prioress's Prologue and Tale. Here the similarity ceases.

The Kk fragment in a plain book hand is an "almost
perfect" text, possibly at the head of the composite group
which forms the largest line of descent for the PrProl and
Tale and which includes Hl[1].[27] Its five variants agree
with at least two dozen other manuscripts;[28] Kk thus can be
considered a nearly perfect example of transcriptive trans-
mission. By contrast, the "ugly cursive hand" which is re-
sponsible for most of the fifteenth-century verse and prose
collection[29] in the total diachronic miscellany of Harley
1704 transmits an improvisational text with the first three
stanzas of the PrProl reworked for presentation outside of
the Canterbury Tales framework and with many editorial
omissions and unique readings. The following text of Hl[1]'s
first stanza shows to what extent the scribe has reworked
the opening of the PrProl:

    1643\1645 O lord thy name howe precious
    1644/1643 Hit is in this world how meruelous   [om.1646-1656]
        1657 O moder mayde o mayde and moder free

```
     1658 O bush vnbrent, brent in Moyses sighte
     1659 That rauysedest doun fro the deitee
     1660 Thurgh thyn humblesse the goost in the light
1661\1662 Of whos vertu conceyued was the faders sapience
     1663 Help me to telle this tale in thy reuerence
```

The title, "Alma Redemptoris Mater," which the Hl[1] scribe

gives to the PrProl and Tale, together with his omissions

of "quod she" in line 1644 and of any other incipits or

explicits, effectively eliminates all reference to the

Canterbury Tales. The first stanza compresses what was

three stanzas, omitting half of the first stanza and the

entire second stanza, transposing three pairs of verses,

making necessary syntactic changes, and editing in several

readings--all reworked into an eight-line stanza with a

rime scheme of aabcbcdd, unlike any Chaucerian rime scheme

and certainly unlike the rime royal in which the rest of

the text is copied. The most interesting of the substantive

variants is the replacement of the noun "tale" for the pro-

noun "it" in line 1663, a necessary change since it is the

first mention of what the speaker is telling, but especially

because it agrees with Hl[1]'s last line variant of the

PrProl which replaces "song" with "tale" and indicates some

editorial consistency, albeit a loss of the musical enhance-

ment which no doubt accompanied the tale as "sung" by the

Prioress about whom it is said:

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     Ful weel she soong the seruice dyuyne
     Entuned in hir nose ful semely  (I,122-123)
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In the tale itself the first unique variants indicate the editorial consistency just suggested. Instead of the standard text's reading in line 1689 describing the "litel scole of Cristen folk" who learned "Swich manere doctrine as men used there," the Hl[1] scribe copies "Swich manere doctrine as we use here," altering the text as before for the time, place, and circumstances of his transmission. The next unique readings occur in the stanza (1706-1712) describing the little child's learning the first verse of "Alma Redemptoris Mater"; the scribe augments "herde" (1709) to "herde and lerned" and changes "koude" (1712) to "knewe." The first change is for explicitness, the second updates the verb to insure easy understanding. Significant editing for the more explicit or more elegant expression occurs next in the stanzas describing the circumstances of the little boy's murder (1755-1768). Hl[1] shares with its immediate variational group, (Mc), the replacement of the "pit" (1761) into which the child is cast by "privy," but Hl[1] is unique in its reading of "drenchid" for "threwe" (1762).

The Hl[1] scribe is responsible for many other omissions and variants than those mentioned here. An examination of the full list of variants reveals typical scribal habits which most often result in the substitution of one commonplace reading for another. But in the specific instances

here discussed the scribe exercises an editorial function
which has resulted in interesting aesthetic consequences,
chief of which has been the arrangement of the Prioress's
Tale for presentation outside of the framework of the
Canterbury Tales.

Of the three types of textual transmission examined in
this chapter, by far the most interesting and most revealing
is that of improvisational transmission. Of the nineteen
manuscripts in the control group of Canterbury Tales manu-
scripts, only British Museum MS. Additional 10340 represents
the infrequent type of memorial transmission; Cambridge Uni-
versity MS. Kk.1.3 is one of the few examples of transcriptive
transmission. British Museum MS. Harley 1704 represents one
of the simplest examples of the improvisational transmission
which characterizes the other sixteen manuscripts of this
study.

NOTES

[1]For a summary of essential bibliography in textual criticism, see George Kane, ed., _Piers Plowman: The A-Version; Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well; An Edition in the Form of Trinity College Cambridge MS. R.3.14 Corrected from Other Manuscripts, With Variant Readings_ (London, 1960). pp. 53-54, n. 3.

[2]John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, With the Aid of Mabel Dean, Helen McIntosh, and Others, With a Chapter on Illuminations by Margaret Rickert, _The Text of the Canterbury Tales Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts_, 8 vols. (Chicago, 1940), hereafter cited as M-R; Kane's text cited above in n. 1.

[3]Kane, p. 62.

[4]Kane, p. 63, quoting from W. W. Greg, _The Calculus of Variants: An Essay on Textual Criticism_ (Oxford, 1927), p. 54.

[5]For a list of key studies on this theory, see Alan Jabbour, "Memorial Transmission in Old English Poetry," _The Chaucer Review_, 3 (1969), 174-190.

[6]Jabbour, _passim_.

[7]Jabbour, p. 177.

[8]_Ibid_.

[9]"By 'text' I here refer to the detailed expression of a poem or tune." Jabbour, p. 181, n. 21.

[10]Jabbour, p. 182.

[11]Jabbour uses this term "lettered tradition" in the same sense as Larry D. Benson, "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry," _PMLA_, 81 (1966), 334, n. 4.

[12]Both "lettered tradition" types of transmission are analyzed in Ruth Crosby, "Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages," _Speculum_, 11 (1936), 88-110 and "Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery," _Speculum_, 13 (1938), 413-432.

[13]Kane, p. 125.

[14]Kane, p. 144.

[15]For a list of such typical responses, see Kane, pp. 127-146.

[16]All abbreviations used in the discussion of the _Canterbury Tales_ are in accord with their use in M-R or F. N. Robinson, _The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer_, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1957).

[17]M-R, I, p. 49.

[18]R. Morris, ed., _Chaucer's Boethius_, EETS, E. S., 5 (London, 1868).

[19]F. J. A. Furnivall, ed., _Chaucer's Boèce_,' Chaucer Society Publication, 75 (1886); Robinson, pp. 903-904.

[20]Robinson, pp. 917-918; for an untypical opposing viewpoint, see Aage Brusendorff, _The Chaucer Tradition_ (London, 1925), pp. 245-252.

[21]M-R, I, p. 48; Brusendorff, p. 248; Sir William McCormick, with the assistance of Janet E. Heseltine, _The Manuscripts of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: A Critical Description of Their Contents_ (Oxford, 1933), p. 535.

[22]M-R considers the text primarily as "of no textual value" (pp. 48-49); Brusendorff shows a disdain in remarking that the scribe who wrote these lines from memory "did not remember them very well"; he further uses this memorial text as circumstantial evidence to discredit the unique copy of "Truth"'s Envoy (p. 248).

[23]The text is reproduced from McCormick, p. 535, with one exception, that McCormick notes the omission of lines 487-490 whereas the omission is of lines 487-489, line 490 coming before line 486 and previously marked only by a "+" sign in McCormick.

[24]The divisions into verse paragraphs are suggested by indentations in the M-R text.

[25]Verse paragraph 2a., itself five lines (486-490), survives only in the dislocated line discussed here and in line 486; lines 486-485 together form a couplet and the only remnant of the original verse paragraph's treatment of the Parson's poverty and charity.

[26]M-R, I, pp. 238-240, pp. 302-303.

[27]M-R, I, p. 303; II, p. 351; VII, p. 152.

[28]M-R, VII, pp. 155-163.

[29]M-R, I, p. 239.

FROM PRINT TO SCRIPT

MS. Chetham 6709 (Ct) and Trinity College, Cambridge MS. R.3.19 (Tc³), both compilations which contain excerpts from the Canterbury Tales, form a special pair that exemplifies a particular kind of manuscript transmission based not so much on the type of copying process involved as on the fact that the transmission is from print to script. This pair of manuscripts further represents two different degrees of improvisational transmission. The compounded aesthetic consequences of improvisational transmission from print to script reveal much both about the art of fifteenth-century manuscript tradition and about the early understanding and appreciation of the Canterbury Tales.

The special type of textual transmission from print to script is amusingly discussed and amply documented in Curt Bühler's The Fifteenth-Century Book.[1] In an opening anecdote to his first lecture on scribes of the fifteenth century, he describes an article he published while still a bibliographical tyro, entitled "An Unusual Fifteenth-century

Manuscript,"[2] which discussed an "unusual" manuscript which represented textual transmission from print to script. After a score of years and many such "unusual" manuscripts Bühler's comment on his early article is simply that "the only thing unusual about this was the truly magnificent display of my own ignorance."[3] His further remarks based on much experience suggest that "every manuscript ascribed to the second half of the fifteenth century is potentially (and often without question) a copy of some incunable" and he goes so far as to say:

> Actually, of course, there is very little real difference between the fifteenth-century manuscripts and the incunabula—and the student of the earliest printing would be well advised if he viewed the new invention, as the first printers did, as simply another form of writing—in this case, "artificialiter scribere."[4]

H. J. Chaytor, in his From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature,[5] although emphasizing "the breadth of the gulf which separates the age of manuscript from the age of print,"[6] would agree in general terms with what was just cited from Bühler; for in his chapter on "Publication and Circulation" he says:

> A very cursory examination of early incunabula will show that the printer did his best to reproduce the text in manuscript form; there will be no title nor title-page, the scribe's abbreviations will be reproduced, his proportion of text to margin observed and so on.[7]

The statements of Bühler and Chaytor are aimed at making broad generalizations to guide the novice. But their directives need to be modified to describe accurately that transition in which there was no gulf between script and print because it was an age of both script and print. Nor was it a no man's land between the worlds of the chirographic and of the typographic books, but a world in which "it would seem likely that manuscripts and incunabula were successful in achieving a sort of peaceful co-existence."[8] Indeed, Bühler corrects his own overstatement about the lack of real differences between manuscripts and incunabula when he speaks of the "peaceful co-existence" of two potential enemies. He further suggests the reasons for such peaceful co-existence in their performance of different services:

> The former [manuscripts] provided what was distinct and personal, while the latter [incunabula] supplied the accurate, useful texts which scholars needed, and at a price which even a German cleric could afford.[9]

This notion of the complementary qualities of script and print serves as a surer guideline to follow in examining the special type of textual transmission from print to script.[10]

MS. Chetham 6709, in contrast with its printed copy-text, manifests quite well the complementary qualities of manuscripts and incunabula; moreover, it brings into relief the

special role of manuscript transmission, that of improvisation for a specific performance, audience, and purpose with the consequent possible alterations of structure, tone, and diction.

Ct is a 285 folio Lydgate-Chaucer anthology of re-ligious verse in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, reputedly compiled by Lydgate and written by a scribe of whom remains only his name and claim to having copied Ct.[11] Ct features Lydgate's Life of Our Lady succeeded by six saints' lives and concluding prayers to Saint Edmund and to the Blessed Virgin Mary.[12] After a detailed five folio table of con-tents, Ct's first three items are excerpts from two differ-ent Caxton prints, the first item being a transcriptive transmission in toto of Caxton's 1484 edition of Lydgate's Life of Our Lady, the second and third items being tran-scriptive transmissions of the only two saints' lives in the Canterbury Tales from Caxton's 1484 edition (Cx^2).[13] Edi-tors of both Lydgate's and Chaucer's texts do not include Ct or the Cx^2 edition in their stemmata or classifications of manuscripts; nor do they list their variants in the criti-cal apparatus because they judge the manuscripts and printed editions of no textual value. Thomas F. Dunn, however, examines the Cx^2 edition of the Canterbury Tales and proves it to be of considerable value for its transmission of a

now lost Y manuscript, the quality of which he demonstrates is "very near to the texts of Ad^3, Dd, and El."[14] While Ct cannot perform a similar retrieval service since Cx^2 does exist, it remains of interest in itself and in contrast to Cx^2. The assumptions which give priority to the textual archetype permit Professor Dunn only to mention that "as a by-product of this work [his dissertation on Cx^2] something of the quality of Caxton both as an editor and as a printer will appear."[15] But the focus of the present study on textual transmission and its aesthetic consequences enables both the Cx^2 printed book and the Ct manuscript to be con-sidered on their own merits and appreciated for their dis-tinct contributions to literary tradition and to an under-standing of the Canterbury Tales.

Ct and Cx^2 transmit very nearly the same text of the SNT and the PrT;[16] yet, although their texts may be described as transcriptive transmissions, Ct is more accurately de-scribed as an improvisational transmission because in its purpose of compiling a "religious library," an anthology of religious verse to our Lady, it places the two Canterbury tales in a new context, inducing an interpretation other than that in Cx^2 or in any other manuscript which transmits the Canterbury Tales in its entirety--not to mention an interpretation other than that of many critics. Besides the

obvious elimination of any dramatic or organic interpretation of relationships among tales and tellers, Ct's presentation of the SNT and the PrT in the context of an anthology of religious verse affirms their interpretation as works of Mariolatry. The structure-in-context of the two tales excludes certain interpretations, simplifies the tone and diction, and eliminates the possibilities for ambivalence. By thus setting a basically transcriptive text in a context which induces a specific interpretation, a kind of improvisational transmission is effected. The Cx^2 edition by contrast presents the same text of the SNT and the PrT, but it does so in the full context of the entire Canterbury Tales and consequently allows the various interpretations that normally belong to the work as a whole. Finally, the contrasting texts of Ct and Cx^2 exemplify that "peaceful co-existence" born of complementary services, the manuscript providing a personalized text, the printed book supplying a text as accurate and faithful to the original as possible.[17]

An equally personalized, yet slightly different type of improvisational text is represented in Trinity College, Cambridge MS. R.3.19 (Tc^3). Like Ct, it is an anthology whose excerpt from the Canterbury Tales is an example of transmission from print to script.[18] Tc^3, however, is an anthology of secular verse and its transcriptive transmission

of the <u>MkT</u> is restructured more thoroughly than Ct's text into a new context which makes the Tc^3 text another example of improvisational transmission.

Among Tc^3's more than fifty poems by Chaucer, Lydgate, and anonymous poets, the text in question occupies one of the booklets which constitute the anthology. Entitled "Bochas," it begins on folio 170r and ends on folio 202. The scribe starts by eliminating that part of the <u>MkProl</u> which presents the on-going banter among pilgrims. He improvises an opening couplet:

> Worshipfull and dyscrete that here present be
> I will you telle a tale two or three
> (B.3157-3158)

He further modifies what he frames as the "prohemyum"[19] by arranging the couplet verse into eight-line stanzas and by making fully consistent the partial pluralization of his copy-text's transmission of the couplet:[20]

> Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> (B.3165-3166)

Finally, the Tc^3 scribe's "prohemyum" includes the first two stanzas of the <u>MkT</u>.

After this "prohemyum" the scribe begins "Bochas" proper by substituting Lydgate's long account of Adam in <u>The Fall of Princes</u>, as MacCracken conjectures, "because Chaucer had not done justice to Adam in his poor one stanza."[21] Knowl-

edge of Tc^3's textual relationships, however, leads to the certain fact that in Tc^3's exemplar, the Cx^1 edition, the Adam stanza is missing[22] and that therefore the scribe, perhaps in his desire to complete the imperfect Chaucer text, perhaps in his desire to begin his own "Bochas" correctly, supplies the Lydgate text on Adam. After the Adam passage the Tc^3 scribe resumes the MkT text and completes it from Sampson to Cresus, omitting as does his exemplar the "Modern Instances" stanzas on the two Pedros. After a simple "Explicit" on folio 188r the scribe completes his own "Bochas" with more extracts and envoys from The Fall of Princes in an order already noted by MacCracken.[23]

The Tc^3 scribe's performance is interesting both for what it reveals about scribal processes and for what interpretation of the Canterbury Tales it yields. Like the Chetham scribe, the Tc^3 scribe offers a personalized and distinct text in contrast to his print exemplar. No sense of plagiarizing or of disrupting the text's integrity is present; rather, Chaucer and Lydgate cooperate smoothly under the eponym of "Bochas." The Tc^3 scribe, however, modifies his text more than does the Chetham scribe. He does not simply place a Canterbury tale in a new context and thus induce a distinct interpretation; he fills in and adds to its existing structure to transform the MkT into a

Chaucerian de casibus narrative. As in the Chetham text,
the dramatic or organic interpretations of the MkT are
eliminated; absent are the concern for the meaning of
tragedy in contrast with the NPT and the interplay between
the Monk's sad tales which must be curtailed by the Knight
and those worthy romances preferred by the courtly group.
The MkT as incorporated into the "Bochas" text and in the
larger context of Tc^3 as a poetic anthology becomes a fine
example of verse narrative in the de casibus tradition.[24]

Tc^3, then, represents a greater degree of improvisa-
tional transmission than the Chetham manuscript; while the
Ct scribe places an unaltered transcriptive text in a new
context to induce a distinct interpretation, the Tc^3 scribe
copies a transcriptive text but so modifies the structure
by inclusion and increments from another text that he
creates in fact a new structure with a context and signifi-
cance of its own. This type of compositive improvisation
results in what are commonly known as conflated or mixed
texts.

The same hand that executes the compositive improvisa-
tion of "Bochas" creates two other conflated texts in the
same manuscript. The first poem which begins "Lady of pite,
for þy sorowes þat þou haddest" is variously titled by the
three scholars who almost simultaneously published it for

the first time in 1954.[25]   Tc[3]'s unique copy is a ten-stanza

rime royal love poem which R. H. Robbins describes as a

competent, typical minor love poem somewhat like Chaucer's

"Compleint damours," with the exception that:

> . . . into this established routine of
> conventional love poetry creep a touch
> of humour and a homely proverb (rare, in-
> deed, unless the whole poem turns com-
> pletely satirical) in the lover's refu-
> sal to play second fiddle to his rival:
>
> But as for your loue, do as yow please;
> And as for your euyll wyll, þerof woll I non;
> ffor hit were ouermoche, ij dogges on o boon.[26]

Robbins proceeds to note one distinct feature of this poem,

namely, its "incorporation of four stanzas from the

pseudo-Chaucerian 'Craft of Lovers,' which appears in this

manuscript a few folios earlier."[27]   Describing "The Craft

of Lovers" as a satiric dialogue which gains its effect

from alternating the wooer's (Cupido's) hyperbolic verses

with the straightforward rejoinders of the woman (Diana),

Robbins states that by the divorce of the four borrowed

stanzas[28] from the wooer's part "the original satire or

ridicule against the courtly tradition is removed." A

closer reading of the poem, however, indicates neither the

typical love poem nor the pure courtly satire. After the

two opening stanzas of invocation and desire to write well,

come three of the four borrowed stanzas praising the beloved

in most flattering terms and requesting successively, "Ye regystre my loue in your remembraunce"(21), "So þat ye wold haue me in remembraunce"(28), and "Exyle me nat out of your remembraunce"(35). But with the first line of stanza six, "What might hit be þat broughte me in þys daunce--"(36), the second half of the poem presents a negative symmetry of the first half. Stanzas six, seven, and eight express the wooer's doubts, distrust, and even dislike for the beloved, climaxing his negative feeling with the image of the be-loved as a bone fought over by two dogs. Finally, stanzas nine and ten mirror the introductory stanzas by the lover's resolution and acceptance of the good and the bad in his beloved and his secular salute to heroes of this world, a perfect balance to the first stanza's sacred invocation. This interpretation places "Lady of pite" between the con-ventional love lyrics such as those that are found early in the manuscript and first published by Wilson[29] and the sa-tirical pieces such as "The Craft of Lovers," "I have a lady where so she be," and "O mosy quince hangyng by youre stalke," found throughout the manuscript and discussed briefly in A. K. Moore's article on some satirical Middle English lyrics.[30] "Lady of pite" is, then, a love lyric that expresses an ambivalent view of both lover and beloved, mixing styles as it mixes texts to create a compositive

improvisation not unlike the far more competent creations of Chaucer himself.

The other mixed text, "O merciful and O merciable" (folio 161r), immediately follows "Lady of pite." Robbins considers it a love epistle and recognizes that it takes its first four stanzas from The Court of Sapience and later inserts into its own unique text one stanza from "The Craft of Lovers."[31] What has not yet been mentioned, however, is that the **four** **non**-consecutive stanzas from Peace's appeal to God the Father in Book One of The Court of Sapience are employed precisely as the first stanza in the preceding poem to introduce a poem of erotic love with a religious prologue, a device typical of the main tradition of love poetry in the Middle Ages.[32]

By compositive improvisation, then, three new poems are created by transmitting and conflating various texts into new contexts. Together with the Chetham scribe's placement of one text in a different context to achieve a distinct interpretation, these texts represent a definite tradition of manuscript transmission and reveal new ways in which the Canterbury Tales, and other medieval poems as well, were understood and appreciated in the fifteenth-century literary tradition.

NOTES

[1]Curt F. Bühler, <u>The Fifteenth-Century Book: The Scribes, The Printers, The Decorators</u> (Philadelphia, 1960), p. 7.

[2]<u>La Bibliofilia</u>, 42 (1940), 65-71.

[3]Bühler, <u>The Fifteenth-Century Book</u>, p. 16.

[4]<u>Loc.cit</u>.

[5]H. J. Chaytor, <u>From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature</u> (Cambridge, 1945).

[6]Chaytor, p. 1.

[7]Chaytor, p. 137.

[8]Bühler, <u>The Fifteenth-Century Book</u>, pp. 16, 26.

[9]<u>Loc. cit</u>.

[10]This guideline is not to be taken as a generalization; there are instances of medieval writers or scribes insisting on accurate, useful texts just as there are modern printers or editors whose editions of Shakespeare, for example, have been personal and distinct.

[11]M-R, I, pp. 83-84; Joseph A. Lauritis, gen. ed., Ralph A. Klinefelter, and Vernon F. Gallagher, <u>A Critical Edition of John Lydgate's Life of Our Lady</u>, <u>Duquesne Studies</u>, Philological Series, 2 (Pittsburgh, 1961), p. 51.

[12]M-R, I, p. 82.

[13]For detailed evidence that the three texts in question are products of transcriptive transmission, see M-R, I, pp. 533-534; II, pp. 397-409; VII, pp. 462-542; Lauritis,

pp. 17, 47; R. A. Klinefelter, "Lydgate's 'Life of Our Lady' and the Chetham MS. 6709," <u>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</u>, 46 (1952), 396-397.

[14]Thomas F. Dunn, <u>The Manuscript Source of Caxton's Second Edition of the Canterbury Tales</u> (Chicago, 1940), p. 36.

[15]Dunn, p. 2.

[16]In their transcriptive transmissions, accidental differences arising from scribal error are of no substantive value.

[17]In the "prohemye" to the second edition, Caxton explicitly states his intention for reprinting the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>:

> whyche book I haue dylygently ouersen and
> duly examyned to thende that it be made
> acordyng vnto his [Chaucer's] owen makyng /
> For I fynde many of the sayd bookes / whyche
> wryters haue abrydgyd it and many thynges
> left out / And in somme place haue sette
> certayn versys / that he neuer made ne
> sette in hys booke / of whyche bookes so
> incorrecte was one brought to my vy yere
> passyd / (W. J. B. Crotch, <u>The Prologues
> and Epilogues of William Caxton</u>, EETS 176
> (London, 1928), 90-91.)

After having explained his inaccurate first printing, Caxton

continues:

> . . . yet I wold ones endeuoryre me to em-
> prynte it agayn / for to satysfye thauctour /
> where as to fore by ygnouraunce I erryd in
> hurtyng and dyffamyng his book in dyuerce
> places in settyng in somme thynges that he
> neuer sayd ne made / and leuyng out many
> thynges that he made whyche ben requysite
> to be sette in it / (<u>loc. cit.</u>)

[18]For detailed evidence, see M-R, I, p. 533; II, pp. 397-409; VII, pp. 462-542.

[19]On folio 170v the frame headings are "Hic incipit prohemyum" and "Explicit prohemyum."

[20]The variants indicate the respective stages of grammatical regularization:

3165   hym] hem $\underline{b}$
3166   is] are Tc^3; heigh] his $\underline{Cx}^1$, their Tc^3

[21]Henry Noble MacCracken, "A New Manuscript of Chaucer's Monkes Tale," MLN, 23 (1908), 93.

[22]M-R, II, pp. 405-406.

[23]The order which MacCracken notes is: Books I, chapters 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 18, 23; II, 2, 1, 6, 12, 13, 15, 21, 22, 25, 27, 30; III, 5, 9, 10, 14, 17, 20; MacCracken, p. 93.

[24]For a similar view based not on manuscript evidence but on medieval traditions of tragic tales, see R. W. Babcock, "The Medieval Setting of Chaucer's Monk's Tale," PMLA, 46 (1931), 205-213. Although Babcock's division between a clerical-moralistic-Boccaccian tradition and a non-clerical-narrative-Chaucerian tradition leaves something to be desired, the Tc^3 text because of its context represents the narrative tradition, in spite of its "Bochas" title and conflation with Lydgate. As this manuscript instance of the de casibus tradition indicates, a more sophisticated analysis of its interpretive spectrum is needed.

[25]Rossell Hope Robbins, "A Love Epistle by 'Chaucer,'" MLR, 49 (1954), 289-292; Henry A. Person, ed., Cambridge Middle English Lyrics (Seattle, 1953), pp. 14-16; Kenneth A. Wilson, "Five Unpublished Secular Love Poems from MS. Trinity College Cambridge 599," Anglia, 72 (1954), 415-418; cf. Carleton Brown and R. H. Robbins, The Index of Middle English Verse (New York, 1943), No. 1838.

[26]Robbins, p. 289.

[27]Loc. cit.

[28]Stanzas 3, 7, 11, and 15 in "Craft" become stanzas 3, 4, 5, and 10 in "Lady of pite."

[29]Wilson, pp. 400-418.

[30]A. K. Moore, "Some Implications of the Middle English _Craft of Lovers_," _Neophilologus_, 35 (1951), 231-238.

[31]Robbins, p. 290.

[32]This device for introducing a love poem is no doubt the reason why Brown first misdescribed "Lady of pite" in his _Register_ as "An orison to the B. V." and why "O merciful and O merciable" was not included in the _Index's_ list of love epistles.

III

THE ART OF SIGNIFICANT OMISSION

A direct contrast to the scribal art of compositive improvisation discussed in the preceding chapter is what might be called the scribal art of significant omission resulting in omissive or edited (in the sense of cut or abbreviated) texts. British Museum MS. Harley 1239 (Ha[1]) offers an example of the art of significant omission on a large scale. A Chaucer anthology containing _Troilus_ and five Canterbury tales,[1] Ha[1] demonstrates by its selection of tales the art of significant omission. From Fragment I(A), Ha[1] selects only the _KnT_; from Fragment II(B[1]), the _MLT_; from Fragment III(D), only the _WBT_; from Fragment IV(E), only the _ClT_; from Fragment V(F), only the _FranklT_. This selection clearly indicates the omission of fabliaux, satires, or what have recently been called problem comedies[2]--all tales in the naturalistic mode.[3] Yet, while this art of omission is significant, what it signifies must remain conjectural. R. M. Wilson considers "the almost complete absence of a single fabliaux [sic] as compared with

the wealth of such literature in France" to be "one of the most surprising things in Middle English literature."[4] He prefers to see this absence, however, as more apparent than real, attributing its failure to be preserved to two major reasons: its essentially popular and transitory nature, and its lack of moralization. It is difficult, then, to determine popularity or taste from either the art of significant omission or its result, the lost literature of the Middle Ages.

The awareness of such a process, however, is helpful as a guideline and corrective to any notions which might be entertained concerning taste and popularity in medieval literature. Charles A. Owen, Jr. in his article, "The Canterbury Tales: Early Manuscripts and Relative Popularity,"[5] uses the wealth of information on the manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales to deduce some notions of their popularity and of the taste on which such popularity depended. Basing his argument on the theory that "a large number of independent textual traditions for a tale points to its relative popularity, while the reverse indicates that the tale circulated principally as a part of the collections," Owen suggests the "immediate popularity for such modern favorites as the Franklin's Tale, the Pardoner's Tale, and the Miller's Tale, as well as for the controversial Prioress's Tale, and

the underrated <u>Canon's Yeoman's Tale</u>."[6] Owen realizes him-
self, however, the discrepancy between a popularity de-
termined by the principle of independent textual traditions
and a popularity based on the principle of selection (i.e.,
excerpted tales in "anthologies"), with its corollary, the
principle of significant omission. Only the <u>PrT</u> is con-
sistently popular on the basis of both criteria. Of the
<u>FranklT</u>, <u>PardT</u>, <u>MillT</u>, and <u>CYT</u>, all high in number of in-
dependent textual traditions, only the <u>FranklT</u> is ex-
cerpted--and then only once for inclusion in the anthology
discussed in this chapter. Conversely, tales having a low
number of independent textual traditions rank high in popu-
larity if based on their selection for other manuscript
collections. Such tales are <u>Melibee</u> and the <u>Clerk's Tale</u>,
each excerpted five times, second only to the <u>PrT</u>'s ex-
cerption six times.

In order to account for the discrepancy between a popu-
larity of Canterbury tales based on the principle of inde-
pendent textual traditions and a popularity based on the
principle of selection and significant omission in "an-
thologies," Owen offers six conjectural factors: "the
better chance that respectable literature has of surviving";
the fabliaux not being copied; the fabliaux being copied
and circulated so frequently as to wear out and be discarded;

librarians' tendencies to make room for their contemporaries' more solemn efforts; "perhaps a real change in taste" toward the moral and religious; and, finally, a change in audience from discriminating court to a wider fifteenth-century audience. Whatever the attraction of these reasons to explain the discrepancies which arise when the Canterbury Tales manuscripts are examined and when any attempt is made to deduce from their textual tradition some indications of taste and popularity, the fact is that everything remains hypothetical.

What can be said, then, about the art of significant omission in Ha^1? From what information can be gathered about its provenance, the Ha^1 scribe styles himself in a florid, but ungrammatical Latin colophon on folio 106v: "heremita de Grenewych mundo quasi totaliter segregatus ac mentibus suorum fortune amicorum et hominum per oblitus" (the Hermit of Greenwich almost totally segregated from the world and thoroughly forgotten through fortune in the minds of his friends and of men). Further, it is clear from the first part of the colophon, "Vestre magnifice et genero-sissime dominacionis" (To your magnificent and most gen-erous lord), that the scribe intended his book for some great personage.[7] It is obvious, then, that he should omit those tales of common people in a common mode and select

tales worthy of such a great personage: romances--chivalric,

Breton, and moral.

A similar art of significant omission had been prac-

tised, coincidentally enough, in MS. Paris Anglais 39 (Ps),

which with Ha[1] is textually related to a non-extant exem-

plar.[8] Jean of Angoulême, as Manly and Rickert put it,

"did not scruple to omit, and did so with opprobrious com-

ment duly transcribed by Duxworth," his scribe.[9] Jean's

art of significant omission, practised on the same exemplar

from which the Hermit of Greenwich copied, is explained by

his "opprobrious comments," one of the rare instances of

"literary criticism" in the Middle Ages. These comments

further suggest reasons for similar instances of omission.

He omits the SqT after line 28 with the comment: "Ista fabula

est valde absurda in terminis et ideo ad presens pretermittatur

nec ulterius de ea procedatur" (This story is exceedingly

absurd at the end and therefore for the present let it be

excepted nor should we proceed any further on it). The MkT

he cuts short in the middle of the tragedy of Sampson, and

long before the Knight of the Canterbury Tales stops the

Monk, Angoulême comments: "Non plus de ista fabula quia

est valde dolorosa" (No more of this story because it is so

sorrowful). He further omits lines 750-1393 of the CYT

"quia termini sunt valde absurdi" (since its expressions are

so absurd); he also omits the CkTP and most of Thopas with-

out comment.

The art of significant omission on the large scale of

complete tales, then, does indicate some facts concerning

taste and popularity. Both Duxworth, working under the

direction of the royal amateur, and the Hermit of Greenwich,

working in hope of securing the favor of a great personage,

select tales approved by the noble caste and omit tales

liable to meet with nobility's disapproval. Evidence such

as this is far more reliable in judging taste and popularity

than the hypothetical factors previously offered.

The art of significant omission, practised on a smaller

scale within the individual text itself, is most notable in

MS. Stonyhurst B.XXIII (St). St, a collection of religious

and didactic works evidently chosen to meet the taste of

some patron, is the product of one scribe who is apparently

a well-educated amateur.[10] His editorial cutting of slightly

more than one-half of Melibee is exceptional in contrast to

"the comparative freedom from editing in the way of drastic

cutting" which characterizes the Melibee texts.[11] Yet this

cutting is certainly in keeping with the tradition of

Melibee. Of the four different French versions of Albertano

of Brescia's Liber consolationis et consilii, that of Renaud

de Louens, the freest, most popular, and the one which

Chaucer converted to Melibee, cuts the Latin original of twenty thousand words to fourteen thousand, completely discarding six of Albertano's fifty-one chapters, omitting almost the whole of eight others, and editing out more than fifty per cent of the material in about half the remaining chapters.[12] Chaucer's translation of Renaud's version rarely departs from the text; of the fewer than twenty-five omissions only one, the omission of a passage on the lack of wisdom in youthful kings, is significant in the context of Richard II's early years of reign.[13] What, then, is to be concluded from the St scribe's extensive cutting of Chaucer's uncut translation of de Louens' Melibee?

Certainly one effect remains constant in both the majority of Melibee texts and in the St's exceptional ab-breviation, an effect well expressed by the pilgrim Chaucer in his explanation of the analogy between his tale of Melibee and the Evangelists' telling of Christ's passion:

> And alle acorden as in hire sentence
> Al be ther in hir tellyng difference.
> (VII, 947-948; B[2] 2137-2138)

Melibee cut or uncut remains a helpful treatise on con-solation and counsel in a situation of common occurrence and, therefore, of popular interest in the Middle Ages. But, if his "sentence" is the same, the St scribe by his art of significant omission reveals a telling difference.

Since he is excerpting Melibee for inclusion in a serious compilation, he is one of the first in the camp of critics who regard Melibee as a serious piece of moralizing.[14] Yet, he does much to alter its accused faults of dullness and interminability. He shaves over 470 of the original 921 lines by making five major splices ranging from 23 to 221 lines each and by omitting one or two lines in nearly two dozen other passages. That these are both conscious and skillful omissions is proven by the relative smoothness of transition which remains at the splices, often because of substituted transition words.[15]

Further, by placing Melibee in a collection of religious and moral treatises the St scribe, like the Chetham scribe who places the PrT and the SNT in a context of religious works, practices an art of omission which excludes the interpretations of the second major camp of Melibee critics. By eliminating the link between Thopas and Melibee, as well as any trace of Melibee's setting in the Canterbury Tales, the St scribe disallows any notion of Melibee as "another burlesque or painful leg-pull."[16] Also, by further eliminating many of the interminable passages of proverbs, the St scribe--had he transcribed Melibee in context--takes away some of the potential irony in Chaucer's apology for his "litel tretys" with "somewhat moore of prouerbes than

ye han herd bifoore."

The art of significant omission, then, a necessary corollary of the art of selection, is one definite mode of textual transmission. By attention to its effects limited judgments may be made about the popularity of works, the taste of specific audiences, and the interpretation of texts.

NOTES

[1]M-R, I, p. 189.

[2]Norman T. Harrington, "Chaucer's Merchant's Tale: Another Swing of the Pendulum," PMLA, 86 (1971), 31.

[3]For classifications of tales, see: Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven, 1963), pp. 156-159; Paul G. Ruggiers, The Art of the Canterbury Tales (Milwaukee, 1965), pp. 46-50.

[4]R. M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature (London, 1939), p. 234. He reiterates the same statement in The Lost Literature of Medieval England (London, 1952), p. 133.

[5]Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Canterbury Tales: Early Manuscripts and Relative Popularity," JEGP (1955), 104-110.

[6]Owen, p. 109. While this factor is the principle one which Owen considers, he allows "other factors than that of popularity" as probable in determining the number of independent textual traditions; namely, date of "publication," process of revision, and circulation alone or with the other tales in a given fragment.

[7]M-R, I, pp. 192-193.

[8]M-R, II, pp. 76-77.

[9]M-R, I, p. 403; all quotations in the remainder of this paragraph are from this page.

[10]M-R, I, pp. 519-521.

[11]M-R, II, p. 371.

[12]J. Burke Severs, "The Tale of Melibeus" in Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, eds. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (1941; rpt. New York, 1958), pp. 560-566; hereafter cited as SA.

[13]<u>SA</u>, pp. 565, 581.

[14]For classification of critical camps with respect to <u>Melibee</u>, see Trevor Whittock, <u>A Reading of the Canterbury Tales</u> (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 210-211.

[15]For substituted transition words, see, in the Corpus of Variants, M-R, VII, pp. 206-461, especially variants in lines 2306, 2363, 2685, 2788, and 2807.

[16]Whittock, p. 211.

IV

SELECTED TALES: "IN SONDRY WYSE OF SONDRY FOLK"

While the first three chapters of this study have
focused on identifying and examining the various types of
textual transmission which scribes perform with the Can-
terbury Tales, this chapter attends to the transmitted
tales themselves and their various interpretations as
performances of different scribes, each practising in his
own way the art of textual transmission.

How a reader views the Canterbury Tales as a whole
more often than not determines how he views the individual
Canterbury tales. The task which modern criticism has tried
repeatedly to accomplish for several decades is to unify the
Canterbury Tales.[1] Thus modern critics have produced read-
ings and interpretations of the Canterbury Tales' unity as
various, piecemeal, original, puzzling, and commonplace as
the first scribal editors produced when they compiled
Chaucer's fragments into the different arrangements of the
Canterbury Tales which exist in eighty-three extant manu-
scripts.

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In his 1912 article entitled "Chaucer's Discussion of
Marriage," George Lyman Kittredge tried to counter the
general tendency of criticism "to read and study the Canter-
bury Tales as if each tale were an isolated unit" by empha-
sizing the connecting links, the larger groups and the
dramatic relationships of the tales to their tellers in the
particular situations out of which each tale arises.[2] Since
then, not considering Kittredge's exaggeration of the
dramatic aspects in order to restore a balance but rather
taking his thesis for granted and making the Canterbury
Tales a roadside drama, modern critics have pressed out
various interpretations of dramatic and organic unity, reach-
ing an arbitrary highpoint in 1955 with R. M. Lumiansky's
Of Sondry Folk and Ralph Baldwin's The Unity of the Canter-
bury Tales.[3]

As often as not, however, the unity propounded is, in
the words of a contemporary critic, "only frame deep," and
the unitive interpretations of many modern critics appear
only as attempts "to bend the poem to an organist theory of
unity," an attractive vision for post-Coleridgean man but
hardly a concept of unity familiar to Chaucer.[4] At present,
critics are consequently stressing Gothic co-ordinate con-
struction, additive collocation, and inorganic unity. Just
two years after the heyday of organic interpretation of the

Canterbury Tales, Charles Muscatine in 1957 gave substantial definition to the form of the Canterbury Tales in terms of the aesthetics of Gothic art and then examined its implications principally in terms of the juxtaposition of styles within the tales.[5] In 1963, D. W. Robertson, Jr. and Robert O. Payne both endorsed the Gothic compositional nature of the Canterbury Tales, although each in his own way sought a type of organic unity arising, according to Robertson, from an all-pervasive Augustinian theology and, according to Payne, from a developing Chaucerian poetics.[6]

Paul G. Ruggiers' The Art of the Canterbury Tales, published in 1965, is an example of the contemporary criticism which must deal with both the organic and the inorganic, the narrative and the dramatic theories of the Canterbury Tales. As is evident from a comparison of remarks in his Introduction, Conclusion, and Part I, Ruggiers answers confusedly the question he poses in the first line of his book: "Everyone who comes seriously to the study of the Canterbury Tales must face the problems of its structure: is it merely a series of fragments held loosely together by one device or another, or is it a complete structure?"[7] While Ruggiers gives recognition to Chaucer's use of a medley or miscellany technique and his imposition of the encyclopaedic form of the middle fragments on a romance

quest form of the beginning and end fragments, nevertheless,
he concludes: "We can only state, finally, what we think
we see when we draw back from the poem as a whole: what is
disjointed and fragmentary in Chaucer's view of life as
pilgrimage is given anchorage within the completer vision
which the beginning and end morally imply."[8] Let Thomas
Aquinas' words, _mutatis mutandis_, supply a just appraisal
of this so prevalent practise of critics: "Praestet fides
supplementum / Sensuum defectui."

The two contemporary critics, after Muscatine, who
contribute most to an understanding of the Canterbury Tales
as Gothic form possessing an inorganic unity are Robert M.
Jordan and Elizabeth Salter.[9] Whereas Muscatine attributes
to Chaucer a mastery of the French tradition, his unique
characteristic achievement being the mixture of styles which
"is the holding together and seeing in relationship to each
other of the wide range of values, some of them antithetical,
which had once made up the richness and poise of medieval
civilization,"[10] both Jordan and Salter are reluctant to
grant him such mastery. Jordan sees "the aesthetic charac-
ter of the poem [as] determined by the dissonance between
the dramatic and the static, not exclusively, or even mainly,
by 'drama.'"[11] Elizabeth Salter, noting the marked fluctua-
tion of literary quality in the Canterbury Tales, goes

further by asking "whether there is not a more serious kind
of fluctuation in the Canterbury Tales--a fluctuation of
purpose, described conveniently, though crudely, as an un-
certain movement between narrative and dramatic principles
of organization."[12] Comparing Chaucer's art with that of
the manuscript illuminators in which there developed an
increasingly dispersive relationship between the components
of the manuscript page, Salter interprets the art of Chaucer
in the Canterbury Tales as "one of accommodation--of new
materials, forms and impulses with older."[13] Salter does
not pretend to offer any rationale for balance or unity,
but states baldly that "the many qualitative contrasts of
pilgrim portraits, Links and Tales are not always to be dis-
cussed as 'Gothic paradox,' or 'justaposition of contrasting
parts': they tell us of a problem of adjustment, rather
than of mastery of the problem."[14]

To the essays of contemporary criticism which seek to
establish a more faithful reading of the Canterbury Tales in
terms of inorganic unity, even verging on imbalance and
disunity--Muscatine's analysis of the mixture of styles,
Jordan's examination of the structures of selected tales,
and Salter's interpretation of the relationship between
links and tales in the light of manuscript illumination
evidence--this chapter offers another contribution based on

fresh data furnished by the scribal processes of textual transmission.

Most critics have argued, and Manly and Rickert have proven, that in none of the fifty-five manuscripts which contain relatively complete texts of the _Canterbury Tales_ is there any indication that the order or arrangement of framework and tales is that of Chaucer.[15] Whatever attraction the ideal of understanding Chaucer's conception (organic or otherwise) of the _Canterbury Tales_ may hold for modern critics, the fact is that his immediate "critics"[16] encountered only fragments or separate units and that these scribes interpreted quite variously the unity, order, and arrangement of the _Canterbury Tales_.[17] Whatever Chaucer's conception of unity in the _Canterbury Tales_,[18] it is certain that his audience as represented by the scribes who transmitted the _Canterbury Tales_ in fifty-five different manuscripts--no two exactly alike--did not consider them as an organic unity.[19]

To an even greater degree, the scribes and compilers of the nineteen manuscripts of this study (manuscripts in which one or more Canterbury tales were excerpted for inclusion with romances, saints' lives, pious verses, and treatises) considered the _Canterbury Tales_ as little more than a fine miscellany, a compilation of tales from which

other miscellanies, other compilations might compile, that is, plunder.

The relevance of scribal processes in the Canterbury Tales is, therefore, cautionary. Attention to the Canterbury tales as they first existed in manuscript tradition can prevent misconceptions of their text as being that printed by any editor from William Caxton to F. N. Robinson. Such attention also allows readers, before coming to their own understandings and interpretations, to see the Canterbury tales as they were first understood, transcribed, and trans-mitted by a limited number of fifteenth-century scribes. It is also in comparison with this first critical reception of the Canterbury Tales that the validity of such modern notions as organic unity, sophisticated aesthetic theory, and erudite Augustinian exegesis in the Canterbury Tales can be tested.

More particularly, a study of the nineteen manuscripts containing excerpted Canterbury tales shows that scribes and compilers selected certain tales, transmitted their texts in a variety of ways, and reset the sometimes modi-fied texts into different contexts of new compilations. These scribal processes of textual transmission and manu-script compilation become virtually a critical interpretation and let the modern scholar see how Chaucer's first "critics"

understood the Canterbury Tales. What the scribes elaborate, emphasize, change, or omit is, therefore, indicative of their understanding and appreciation of the selected tales and, by implication, of the Canterbury Tales. A more viable relationship might be posited between the scribe as teller and his transmission of the text as tale than has been made between the Canterbury pilgrims as tellers and their dramatic performances as tales. More complete than the phrase, "of sondry folk," which Lumiansky selects from line twenty-five of the General Prologue in order to stress the tellers of tales and the dramatic unity of the Canterbury Tales, is the phrase, "in sondry wyse," which Chaucer employs more frequently to express, not merely the ambivalence, but a fortiori, the polyvalence of values, attitudes, approaches, and styles of life and art.[20] Thus, in one of the most crucial passages, that of his own (that is, Chaucer the Pilgrim) headlink to the tale of Melibee, he describes what well might be the key of remembrance for the Canterbury Tales. In response to Harry Bailly's request to tell a tale, Chaucer replies:

> Gladly quod I by goddes swete pyne
> I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose
> That oghte liken yow as I suppose
> Or elles certes ye be to daungerous
> It is a moral tale vertuous
> Al be it toold som tyme in sondry wyse
> Of sondry folk as I shal yow deuyse

> As thus ye woot that euery euangelist
> That telleth vs the peyne of Iesu Crist
> Ne seith nat alle thyng as his felawe dooth
> But nathelees hir sentence is al sooth
> And alle accorden as in hir sentence
> Al be ther in hir tellyng difference
> (VII.2126-2138)

Clearly, Chaucer is talking about the art of story telling and he says, in effect, that each telling of a story is different, even as each performance of a musical score varies; further, it is this difference which is significant and which, in fact, tells who is the consummate teller or judge of tales. The achievement of the Canterbury Tales, then, is not simply its unique portrayal "of sondry folk," but especially its rendition of their tales told "in sondry wyse."[21]

This evidence further suggests that, besides the commonly-held view of a dramatic ordering principle in the Canterbury Tales, there is a narrative ordering principle. For just as critics have rightly perceived but exaggerated a dynamics of dramatic art in the links, so in the tales themselves and in their inter-relationships one can perceive Chaucer's dynamics of narrative art, his creation of sondry tales and sondry tellings of these tales. But the road to this highway, this Jerusalem of narrative art, begins with an examination of the more commonplace by-ways in the scribal art of textual transmission.[22] What follows, then, is an

analysis of each Canterbury tale selected for compilation in the nineteen manuscripts of this study in order to determine the "sondry wyse" in which the sondry tales were told. The order of tales followed is that of the best manuscript tradition, that of a-El.

The first Canterbury Tale selection is Ad[4]'s memorial text from the General Prologue of the Parson's description, in parallel columns with the unique text of "Truth," including its Envoy. The two texts serve as a double pendant for the main text of the manuscript, that of Chaucer's translation of The Consolation of Philosophy. As demonstrated in detail in Chapter I, the Parson's description loses its rhetorical coherence as found in Robinson's standard text. Absent also are all the elements which relate it organically or dramatically within the Canterbury Tales. Gone is the persona of Chaucer the Pilgrim with all the irony and polyvalency he brings to the General Prologue; gone is the dramatic sense of a rookie reporter recalling his hurried interviews with the crowd of pilgrims and the interplay of their various descriptions; gone, lastly, is the allusive style in which, for example, the Parson's figure of speech, "That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?", might strike with a resonance intensified by vibrations from earlier descriptions such as the Yeoman's silver

Christopher medal, the Prioress's brooch of gold, the Monk's gold pin, Friar Huberd's soliciting of silver for the poor friars, even the Clerk's little gold in the coffer, the Guildsmen's silver-mounted knives, and the Physician's special love of gold. The Parson's description serves, however, as a typical, static exemplary figure,[23] embodying in its brief religious portrait the philosophical wisdom of the main text and serving as a gloss to the text of Boethius' Consolation.[24] Finally, instead of any dramatic interplay there is a thematic coherence among the prose thesis concerning wisdom in an unstable world, the cautionary lyric calling for self-rule and holy pilgrimage to God's highway, and the exemplary figure of the Parson as a pilgrim of truth and wisdom. Though not a story, there is a significant difference between the Ad[4] scribe's memorial description of the Parson and the same description as found in the context of the General Prologue; thematic considerations replace dramatic ones.

The KnT is selected twice for inclusion in compilations, both composed by religious scribes and apparently for patrons. Here, however, the comparison stops as Manly and Rickert describe the Ha[1] text as "very bad" while the Ll[1] text is extremely close to the d-group manuscripts, "departing only by much unique editing."[25] A comparison of the Ha[1] text

with Ps, its partner in a constant pair,[26] as well as with

Ll[1], reveals the differences among the respective scribes

in telling the _KnT_. The Hermit of Greenwich, as the Ha[1]

scribe styles himself, is responsible for over thirty unique

editorial variants which are aptly called "unique errors"

by Manly and Rickert; his "very large number of small omis-

sions, additions, substitutions and other defects . . .

suggest either an ignorant or careless scribe or an exem-

plar hard to read."[27] Comparison with Ps which uses the

same exemplar leaves little doubt but that the former

alternative is more likely. M. M. Crow's study entitled

"Unique Variants in the Paris Manuscript of Chaucer's _Can-_

terbury Tales" describes nearly two dozen of the sixty

unique, intentional, or editorial changes in the Ps manuscript

which "were made to improve the meter, the rime, or the

sense, to add explanatory matter, to supply words for blank

or illegible passages, and to cut out parts not considered

interesting."[28] For example, instead of the Ps scribe's

correct copying of "The rede statue of Mars with spere and

targe" (I.975) to describe Theseus' banner, or his accurate

transcription of the "thousand yeer" period (I.1669) to

emphasize the unpredictability of God's providence and

governance, the Ha[1] scribe commits the erring transmission

of a "rede state of armys" on Theseus' banner and a mere

"twelmond yeer" to counter the improbability of a certain day's occurrence. Converse instances where the Ha[1] scribe faithfully copies his exemplar but the Ps scribe varies reveal the same ignorance of the former as opposed to the latter's knowledgeability. In three instances where the Ps scribe supplies unique spurious lines the Ha[1] scribe has apparently followed the exemplar in which the omissions occur; in each case the Ps scribe has supplied a riming line which was unnoticed by the Hermit of Greenwich.[29]

In a generally poor text, then, the Ha[1] scribe shows himself as a poor teller of tales. Only once does he seem to offer a consistent and notable interpretation, namely, in the course of transcribing the first passage which describes Emelye, the two knights' first sight of her, and their ensuing debate (I.1033-1186). Of the six times that "romen" occurs in this passage the Ha[1] scribe has changed the first two occurrences that pertain to Emelye.[30] In line 1069 Emelye is presented in her garden as she "Was in hir walk and _mornyd_ vp and doun" and when Palamon first describes her he says:

> The fairnesse of that lady that I se
> Yond in the gardyn _mewyng_ to and fro
> Is cause of al my cryynge and my wo
> (I.1098-1100)

These two editorial variants which introduce a tone of sadness, and possibly also of confinement,[31] in presenting

Emelye, bespeak more a narrator like the Squire whose attitude toward Canacee is similarly pitying, than a narrator like the Knight whose Emelye is not given much more attention than Aude in the Song of Roland--both narrators being concerned more with the deeds of men on God's earth. The tone of the Ha[1] text, however, is one that might be expected from the Hermit of Greenwich.

By contrast, the Ll[1] scribe's "much unique editing," like that of the Ps scribe, shows more awareness of and concern for the sense rather than the sentiment of the KnT. His more than sixty unique substantive variants are primarily intended as improvements of meaning: replacing unfamiliar with familiar words, interchanging general and specific words, trimming words to simplify the text, or adding explanatory words to complete the sense. Moreover, in three distinct variants the Ll[1] scribe manifests an over-all concern for the KnT as a philosophical romance of the noble life--an attention to the text and tale not only exceptional among scribes[32] but also in the mainstream of current criticism.[33] The first two variants occur near the end of part one when, after Arcite's release, Palamon addresses the cruel gods, lamenting the just man's plight in contrast to beasts and criminals (I.1313-1333). In the descriptive clause modifying the "cruel goddes that gouerne /

This world with byndyng of youre word eterne," the Ll[1] scribe

replaces "word" with "lufe"; later in the complaint, when

Palamon states that man must curb his will whereas "a beest

may al his lust fulfille," the Ll[1] scribe replaces "lust"

again with "luf." Together these editorial changes empha-

size the role of love throughout creation and foreshadow

in clearest terms the solemn speech of Theseus to the First

Mover who "Whan he first made the faire cheyne of loue /

Greet was theffect and heigh was his entente" (I.2988-2989).

The third editorial variant occurs in part three when the

battle ranks of knights are forming to decide the question

of who marries Emelye. The Knight-narrator exclaims:

> And sikerly ther trowed many a man
> That neuere sithen that the world bigan
> As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond
> As fer as god hath maked see and lond
> Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye
> For euery wight that loued chiualrye
> And wolde his thankes han a passant name
> Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game
> And wel was hym that ther to chosen was
> (I.2101-2109)

To the temporal-spatial panorama that is already achieved

to emphasize the excellence of nobility at "that game" the

Ll[1] scribe shows his comprehension of the passage's uni-

versal significance by altering the expression "euery wight

that loued chiualrye" to "euery wight that is made that

lufes chiualrye," thus strengthening the notion of a First

Mover to whom the noble life is best and who, therefore, made

men who would love and strive to achieve such a life.

Even more important than the significant differences between the Ha[1] scribe's and the Ll[1] scribe's textual transmissions of the KnT is the striking omission of all fabliaux in any of the nineteen manuscripts which excerpt Canterbury tales for inclusion in their compilations. The scribes, as tellers of tales, have chosen to transmit only the most proper and edifying tales, omitting entirely the MillT, RvT, CkT, FrT, SumT, MerchT, SqT, PhysT, PardT, ShipT, Thop, NPT, CYT, and MancT. As might be expected, the scribes, as tellers of tales, are much less diversified in their tastes than the pilgrims and certainly less experimental than Chaucer, the maker of both tales and tellers.

The next tale selected by scribes for inclusion in their compilations is the MLT. The Ha[1] scribe compiles it in his anthology of Chaucer's romances which contains Troilus, KnT, MLT, WBT, ClT, and FranklT. Making only four unique but inconsequential editorial changes, the Ha[1] scribe, by the context into which he includes the MLT, interprets the tale as a romance.

For the scribe of Cambridge University MS. Ee.2.15 (Ee), however, the MLT is incorporated into a four-booklet collection of moral or religious tales and treatises including, in order, a fragment of Mirk's Festial, the MLT entitled

"Costauns," a fragment of "Three Questions" from <u>Confessio Amantis</u> (I.3067-3402), Lydgate's lives of St. Edmund and St. Fremund, "The Charter of Fefment of the Sowle," and a legend of St. Augustine of Canterbury. By placing the <u>MLT</u> in such a context and by making more than forty editorial changes in the text, mostly for clarity, explanation, or elaboration, often of religious matters, the Ee scribe narrates the <u>MLT</u> more as a romantic tale of piety than as the romance transcribed by the Ha[1] scribe in his Chaucer anthology. What is one man's romance is another's piety and the difference appears in the telling.

The Ha[1] scribe, already discussed for his transmission of the <u>KnT</u> and the <u>MLT</u>, is exceptional among the various scribes who compiled the nineteen manuscripts of this study. He alone has compiled an exclusively Chaucerian anthology and he alone has excerpted more than two tales for compilation. Although uninteresting as a transmitter of texts, the Ha[1] scribe is valuable to us as a compiler who has selected certain tales, omitted others, and by these choices indicated a particular reading of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>. Discussed earlier as indicative of medieval taste and popularity with regard to the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>, the Ha[1] scribe's selection of tales also implies a reading of that famous series of tales known as the Marriage Group. His selection

of only three of the tales in the Marriage Group, those tales that are romances, and his omission of the dramatic links, especially the Wife of Bath's Prologue, indicate a sense of coherence and unity other than organic or dramatic. His Chaucer anthology possesses a unity based on genre, all six pieces being romances of one sort or another. His lack of any significant editorial variants--the two most striking alterations being the common occurrence of beginning the KnT at I.893 and the six spurious lines which capsulize the opening of the FranklT (V.629-788)--manifests a common under-standing and presentation of the selected tales.

The ClT, also transmitted by the Ha[1] scribe with only four insignificant variants, is selected by four other scribes for inclusion in compilations. With Melibee, also excerpted five times, the ClT is second in "popularity" to the PrT which is included in six separate compilations. The five distinct scribes of the ClT, as tellers of the tale, furnish evidence justifying the two major interpretations of contemporary critics. The four scribes of Ha[1], Ll[1], Ph[4], and Ra[4], all transmit the ClT as an exemplary religious fable after the manner of Petrarch. Both in text and in context each scribe indicates a conventional religious rendering of the tale. The Ra[4] scribe, in fact, adds to

the conclusion three spurious lines which emphasize the
moral lesson to be learned:

> But yet god graunt vs grace to make good ende
> And bryng vs oute of euery bale
> And euer to haue pacience in oure mynde[34]

Neither the presence (in Ha[1]) nor absence (in Ll[1], Ph[4], and
Ra[4]) of the Wife of Bath stanza, not the Envoy with its
Archwives stanza in place (in Ha[1] and Ph[4]) or after E.1212
(in Ll[1] and Ra[4])--nothing of the satirical or realistic
counterpoint as implied by the Clerk himself prevents these
four scribes from presenting the ClT as a religious fable
in compilations that are predominantly moral and religious.

The Np scribe, however, whose wit is earlier manifest
in a ditty inserted after his transcription of Libeus Dis-
conyus,[35] transmits the ClT more in the spirit of the pil-
grim Clerk. He begins only at line E.92, as if he refuses
to be fooled by the false occupatio of the "prohemye" about
which the Clerk says:

> And trewely as to my iuggement
> Me thynketh it a thyng inpartinent
> (E.53-54)

His conclusion, moreover, firmly indicates his appreciation
of the satirical value of the ClT. After concluding the
tale both with the inclusion of the Wife of Bath stanza
and with the Archwives stanza in place, plus the seven lines
of the Host's stanza, the Np scribe writes "in large

flourished letters": "Explicit ffinus [sic]" (Here is the
end). Then he adds directly below: "Hic pennam fixi penitet
me si male scripci qd Mprf[More]" (Here I set down my pen.
It grieves me to have written so poorly says More). After
a tiny sketch of a long-eared quadruped followed by the year
1457 on the same line, and the digits one to ten on another
line, the Np scribe pens his critical comment on the C1T in
the form of the Envoy from Lydgate's satirical poem "Beware of
Doublenesse":

> O ye wymmen, which been enclyned,
> Bi enfluence of ʒoure nature,
> To bene as pure as gool fined,
> In ʒoure strenght for to endure
> Arme youre silfe in strong armoure,
> Lest men assaile your sikirnesse,
> Set on ʒoure brest ʒour silve to assure
> A myghti schilde of doblenesse.[36]

Both Envoys of Chaucer and Lydgate, in a delightful tone of
grave irony,[37] encourage women to be true to themselves, to
their "heigh prudence," their "sikirnesse." By thus
juxtaposing the Envoy and the tale, the real and the ideal,
Chaucer, Lydgate, the pilgrim Clerk, and the Np scribe force
a comparison and choice. Elizabeth Salter has aptly
described the effect:

> The taking of a common-sense view (such
> as the Wife of Bath, with her reliance
> upon 'experience,' would have approved)
> and the exaggeration of it until it be-
> comes entirely ludicrous and grotesque
> are, in fact, ways of defending the
> basic premises of the Griselda story.

> Realism is pressed so far that idealism
> begins to seem desirable--even accessible.[38]

The ClT becomes, then, indeed ironic and satirical, but not

of the conventional fable nor of the religious idealism it

embodies--though Chaucer's pen is, here as elsewhere, a

two-edged sword cutting heavily in one direction and ever

so slightly in the other. Rather, the ClT, as the Np scribe

understands and transcribes it, makes Griselda "a more

acceptable, less preposterous creation than the Wife of

Bath and 'archewyves' of her kind."[39] The several scribes

of the ClT have indeed rendered the tale with some important

differences.

Quite the opposite tendency is manifest in the six

separate texts of the PrT. This popular Canterbury tale

receives basically the same handling from the six scribes

who include it in their various compilations. In their

transcription of the text the scribes of Ct and Kk intro-

duce no editorial variants. The scribes of Hl[1], Hl[2], Hl[3],

and Ra[4] introduce, respectively, only seventeen, seven, two,

and nine editorial variants, all of which aim to make the

sense clearer by alteration of words or expressions and

none of which contribute to a telling of the PrT as anything

other than the pious legend that it is--notwithstanding the

host of modern interpretations with which Florence H. Ridley

so aptly deals in defense of the conventional presentation
which each of the six scribes render for the PrT.[40]

From the context, however, into which the six scribes
as compilers set the Prioress's pious legend, evidence indi-
cates various emphases in their appreciation of the tale,
aspects of interest in the tale which perhaps led four of
the six scribes to excerpt and include the PrT in their
compilations. In the Kk and the Ra^4 compilations, where
the PrT is respectively a fragment and a mutilated text,
there is no indication of any particular interpretation,
much less emphasis, of the tale. In Ct, however, as
described in Chapter II, the PrT is among five other saints'
lives and is thus included particularly as a saint's life.
In Hl^1, the PrT, under the title "Alma Redemptoris Mater,"
is transcribed between two penitential poems entitled "Do
mercy to fore thi Jugement" and "In thy most helth wisely
be ware." In such a context the PrT becomes an exemplary
tale manifesting the Blessed Virgin Mary's mercy on her
faithful, as is abundantly clear in the antiphon to Hugh of
Lincoln, praying him to intercede "That of his mercy God
so merciable / On us his grete mercy multiplie / For rever-
ence of his mooder Marie / Amen" (VII.1878-1880).

In Hl^2, a large anthology of one hundred and thirty-
eight verse pieces, the first of the two scribes who compile

the manuscript[41] includes the <u>PrT</u> in a series of miracle
tales:

> fol. 71b Story of Dan Joos a monk whose
> devotion to the BVM is rewarded
> when upon his death red roses
> spring from his mouth, eyes,
> and ears with the name of Mary
> engraved upon them in gold.
>
> fol. 73b <u>PrT</u>
>
> fol. 78 How a man of Paris who prayed
> to souls in Purgatory was pur-
> sued by his enemies to a church-
> yard where the dead rose from
> their graves and saved him.
>
> fol. 78b A similar tale about Wulfrike a
> Wiltshire priest whose prayers
> for poor souls were rewarded when
> upon his dying they arise to pray
> for him.[42]

The Hl[2] scribe has selected the <u>PrT</u> primarily as a miracle
tale and has thus given the tale a slightly modified empha-
sis in his telling.

The Hl[3] scribe transcribes the <u>PrT</u> in his own manner
including the <u>PrT</u> as the first of three tales about martyrs,
the other two being the <u>SNT</u> entitled "Vita Sancte Cecilie"
and "De Sancto Erasmo Martire."[43] In such a context the Hl[3]
scribe tells the <u>PrT</u> as a martyr's life bearing witness to
Christ and Mary.[44] In the <u>PrT</u>, then, in contrast to the
divergent interpretations given for the <u>ClT</u>, there are
similar interpretations. The only differences which occur

are emphases of appreciation, focusing on the PrT "in sondry
wyse" as a saint's life, a tale of Mary's mercy, a miracle
story, and a martyr's life.

The text of Melibee, like that of the PrT, receives a
transmission free from divergent interpretations. In three
instances, however, scribes modify the tale's significance
by placing it in specific articulation to larger and dif-
ferent contexts. The Sl[3] scribe and the Ar scribe make
fewer than ten editorial variants; and, the compilers of
these two manuscripts include Melibee as a moral treatise
or tale among works of a similar nature.[45] The Sl[3] scribe,
in a small, neat, cursive hand, copies perhaps from the same
exemplar as El and thus renders important textual trans-
mission.[46] The Ar text, though showing signs of corrections
by the scribe and another, remains corrupt and is mutilated
at line VII.2967.[47] In the hands of both the Sl[3] scribe
and the Ar scribe, Melibee is transmitted in its conventional
text and context.

Three of the five scribes, however, who transmit
Melibee in miscellanies incorporate this tale into a specific
form and context for their own particular purposes. In Pp,
Melibee, together with the ParsProl and Tale, forms the dis-
tinct middle of a three-part anthology of mostly Chaucerian,
some Lydgate, and other pieces. In the absence of any

evidence indicating a particular emphasis in the tale, the context in which _Melibee_ is transmitted indicates its probable selection as representative of Chaucer's prose. For, despite the inclusion of the seventy-four lines of the _ParsProl_, and the implications in the _ParsProl_ and the explicit of _Melibee_ that _Thopas_ and _MancT_ were told,[48] the fact is that only the two prose pieces are excerpted for part two of the Pp manuscript, while part one features miscellaneous prose and poetry, and part three consists exclusively of Chaucer's short poems.

The St scribe, discussed earlier for his art of significant omission, treats _Melibee_ not only as a serious piece of moralizing. But, by the spurious line which he adds to the last line, he gives further emphasis to the religious conclusion:

> For douteless if we be sory and repentant
> of the synnes and giltes whiche we han
> trespased in the sighte of our lord god
> [3075] / he is so free and so merciable /
> that he wole foryeuen vs oure giltes /
> and bryngen vs to the blisse that neuere
> hath ende [spurious line:] To the wiche
> blis he vs bryng þat blood on þe crosse
> for vs spreinde cryst Iesus.[49]

In contrast to the religious emphasis, which the St scribe gives to _Melibee_, is the fifth and final scribe's stress on its proverbial wisdom. Copier and compiler of the complete manuscript, the Hn scribe almost divides the compila-

tion into two equal parts. The first consists of religious
pieces, such as Lichfield's "Complaint Between God and Man,"
a debate by the Four Daughters of God, and several stories
revolving about the life of Christ. The second part begins
with Melibee, under the title of "Proverbis," followed by
the MkT; it includes mostly moral verses, such as Burgh's
"Greater and Lesser Cato," Lydgate's "Churl and Bird,"
"Horse, Sheep and Goose," and some concluding verses of
miscellaneous character.[50] The Hn scribe, while not editing
as largely as the St scribe, makes fifty cuts from one to
thirty lines and edits, by alteration or expansion, some
seventy times. While his much edited transmission of the
text shows no great difference in his telling of the tale,
it does manifest a marked interest in making the tale clear
and understandable. Thus, when the Hn scribe concludes
with the Explicit, "They that this present and forseyde tale
haue or shal Reede Remembyr the noble prouerbis that rebukyth
Couetise and vengeanse takyng in truste of Fortune whiche
hathe causyd many a noble prince to fall as we may rede of
them here folluyng,"[51] he is setting Melibee in a context
which stresses the tale as proverbial wisdom. Moreover, the
Hn scribe has omitted the dramatic link between Melibee and
the MkT and created his own non-dramatic, thematic link
expressive of a different concept of unity or coherence of

tales than that which many contemporary critics would pro-
pose.

The MkT, as transmitted by the Hn scribe under the
title "The falle of Princis,"[52] and linked to Melibee by the
moralistic passage just cited, becomes a series of caution-
ary tales showing what happens to men who, unlike Melibee,
cast their fate with Fortune and, consequently, fall. Like
the scribe of Tc^3, discussed in Chapter II and the only other
scribe to excerpt the MkT, the Hn scribe eliminates the
dramatic prologue to the MkT, which presents the on-going
banter among the pilgrims, to begin with the tale proper
(VII.3181). While both scribes eliminate the dramatic
dimensions of the MkT, however, each presents the tale
with a difference. The Hn scribe sets the tale in a highly
moralistic context and renders an interpretation of the
tale as a de casibus tract in the Boccaccian tradition;
the Tc^3 scribe sets the tale in a poetry anthology and
thus implies a narrative concern in the Chaucerian tradition.[53]

A difference similar to that between the Tc^3 and the
Hn versions of the MkT exists between the only two excerpted
textual transmissions of the ParsT. The Pp scribe, as dis-
cussed earlier in this chapter for his telling of Melibee,
selects the only two prose tales from the Canterbury Tales

and compiles them in a separate middle section of a three-part anthology, a section featuring Chaucer's prose. This implied stylistic concern is in direct contrast to the strictly religious presentation of the <u>ParsT</u> in Ll^2, a miscellany of religious prose and verse in English and Latin.[54] In this compilation, most likely made in a monastery by a number of monks and containing all of Richard Rolle's English works except his <u>English Psalter</u>, the scribe who copies the <u>ParsT</u>, if he does know of Chaucer and of the <u>ParsT</u> as such, makes no mention of these facts. He simply entitles the **tale** as a treatise, "Prima pars penitencie," and obviously tells it as an ethical treatise. It is a mild irony of textual transmission, then, that the Pp text includes the <u>Retraction</u> which, for all its religious import, is **omitted** in the Ll^2 text, perhaps because it was not in the copy-text, perhaps because it was not part of "Prima pars penitencie."

All the tales selected, transmitted, and compiled in the nineteen manuscripts containing only excerpts from the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> have been examined with attention to the scribal processes which are responsible for their existence. The conclusions of such an examination ought to be taken in the spirit in which Chaucer first proffered his tales, a spirit which places a healthy restraint on critics:

> But first I pray yow of youre curteisye
> That ye narette it nat my vileynye
> Thogh that I pleynly speke in this matere
> To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere
> Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely
> For this ye knowen also wel as I
> Who so shal telle a tale after a man
> He moot reherce as neigh as euere he kan
> Euerich a word if it be in his charge
> Al speke he neuere so rudeliche and large
> Or ellis he moot telle his tale vntrewe
> Or feyne thyng or fynde wordes newe
> (I,725-736)

The most obvious conclusion is that the scribes as
Chaucer's early audience, his first critics, and successive
tellers of the Canterbury tales, do not consider the Can-
terbury Tales as an inviolable organic whole. Even the
scribes of the fifty-five manuscripts containing more or
less complete versions of the Canterbury Tales have been
shown to possess no firm sense of unity either in the
entire work or in the tales themselves.[55] Nor does any
one of the scribes excerpting tales sense any dramatic
principle. They do, however, both in their textual trans-
missions and in the contexts of their compilations, indi-
cate a sense of other unities, other principles of order
and arrangement, other interpretive concerns: thematic,
didactic, moral, religious, satirical, generic, and
stylistic. Considered as tellers of tales, then, these
scribes serve as invaluable contemporary interpreters of
the Canterbury Tales. They help to restore trust and

primary attention to the tales. They best prepare the reader to appreciate the dynamics of Chaucer's narrative art, the creation of "sondry talys" "in sondry wyse of sondry folk." As its title suggests, the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> is--at least as much, if not more--about its tales rather than its tellers.

NOTES

[1]Major reviews of Chaucerian scholarship and criticism in which the trend to seek the unity of the Canterbury Tales can be found are: Albert C. Baugh, "Fifty Years of Chaucer Scholarship," Speculum 26 (1951), 659-672; Rob Roy Purdy, "Chaucer Scholarship in England and America: A Review of Recent Trends," Anglia 70 (1951), 345-381; Charles Muscatine, "Chaucer in an Age of Criticism," MLQ 25 (1964), 473-478; William R. Crawford, Bibliography of Chaucer: 1954-63 (Seattle and London, 1967), xiii-xl; Meredith Thompson, "Current and Recurrent Fallacies in Chaucer Criticism" in Essays in American and English Literature Presented to Bruce Robert McElderry, Jr., ed. Max F. Schulz with William D. Templeman and Charles Metzger (Athens, Ohio, 1967), pp. 141-164.

[2]George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," MP 9 (1912), 435-467; since then this article has been reprinted in several recent anthologies.

[3]R. M. Lumiansky, Of Sondry Folk: The Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales (Austin, 1955); Ralph Baldwin, The Unity of the Canterbury Tales, Anglistica, 5 (Copenhagen, 1955).

[4]Robert M. Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: Some Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 113, 115.

[5]Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957; paperback, 1969); see particularly pp. 166-173.

[6]D. W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: A Study in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton, Oxford, 1963); Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven and London, 1963).

[7]Paul G. Ruggiers, <u>The Art of the Canterbury Tales</u> (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), p. xiii.

[8]Ruggiers, p. xviii.

[9]Robert M. Jordan, <u>op. cit</u>.; Elizabeth Salter, "Medieval Poetry and the Visual Arts," <u>Essays and Studies</u>, 22 (London, 1969), 16-32.

[10]Muscatine, <u>Chaucer and the French Tradition</u>, p. 247.

[11]Jordan, p. 130.

[12]Salter, p. 29.

[13]Salter, p. 29.

[14]Salter, p. 31.

[15]Baugh, pp. 668-669; Purdy, p. 346.

[16]For a more thorough view of the scribe as critic, see Judson B. Allen, <u>The Friar As Critic: Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages</u> (Nashville, 1971).

[17]Some essential articles on the order and arrangement of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> are in chronological order: F. J. A. Furnivall, <u>A Temporary Preface to the Chaucer Society's Six-Text Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales</u>, Chaucer Society Publications, 2nd Ser., No. 3 (London, 1868); Henry Bradshaw, "The Skeleton of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales," <u>Collected Papers of Henry Bradshaw</u> (Cambridge, 1889), pp. 102-148; Eleanor P. Hammond, "On the Order of the Canterbury Tales," <u>MP</u> 3 (1905-06), 159-178; J. S. P. Tatlock, <u>The Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works</u>, Chaucer Society Publications, 2nd Ser., No. 37 (London, 1907), 131-219; W. W. Skeat, <u>The Evolution of the Canterbury Tales</u>, Chaucer Society Publications, 2nd Ser., No. 38 (London, 1907); Carleton Brown, "The Evolution of the Canterbury <u>Marriage Groups</u>," <u>PMLA</u>, 48 (1933), 1041-1059; J. S. P. Tatlock, "The Canterbury Tales in 1400," <u>PMLA</u>, 50 (1935), 100-139; Carleton Brown, "The Man of Law's Headlink and the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales," <u>SP</u> 34 (1937), 8-35; <u>M-R</u>, II (1940), pp. 474-518; Germaine Dempster, "Manly's Conception of the Early History of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>," <u>PMLA</u> 61 (1946), 379-415; Germaine Dempster, "A Chapter in the Manuscript History of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>: The Ancestor of Group d, the Origin

of its Texts, Tale-order, and Spurious Links," PMLA 63 (1948), 456-484; Germaine Dempster, "The Fifteenth-Century Editors of the Canterbury Tales and the Problem of Tale Order," PMLA, 64 (1949), 1123-1142; W. W. Lawrence, "The Sequence of the Tales" in his Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales (New York, 1950), pp. 90-118; Robert A. Pratt, "The Order of the Canterbury Tales," PMLA 66 (1951), 1141-1167; Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Development of the Canterbury Tales," JEGP 57 (1958), 449-476; Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Earliest Plan of the Canterbury Tales," Medieval Studies 21 (1959), 202-210; Donald C. Baker, "The Bradshaw Order of the Canterbury Tales: A Dissent," NM 63 (1962), 245-261; Jun Sudo, "The Order of the Canterbury Tales Reconsidered," HSELL, 10 (1963), 77-89.

[18]Elizabeth Salter's remarks on "the need of the present-day critic to find 'unity'" versus "less pressure on the medieval writer than upon later writers to demonstrate over-all unity by any sort of cohesive methods" are instructive. Suggesting that "there is also no very sharp distinction between the compiler of materials written by others, and the creative artist," she states: ". . . we must beware of assuming it necessary to prove the unity of the whole composition by sophisticated aesthetic theory; since it is possible that Chaucer felt himself to be more in the position of the compiler of a miscellany than, for instance, in that of the architect of a Gothic cathedral." Salter, pp. 24-25.

[19]That medieval readers did not fail to see dramatic linking in the Canterbury Tales, but also that they saw other principles of unity--thematic, generic, dogmatic, stylistic--is suggested by the following manuscript examples. The dramatic principle is especially evident in MS. La which supplies a full set of spurious links and indicates a readiness to complete the CkT and SqT. Several manuscripts manifest a generic interest and a sense for the kind of unity that is made fuller by the additive collocation of more tales. Such manuscripts are, for example, Nl which adopts the Tale of Beryn, Ch which adopts Hoccleve's Sleeveless Garment story as a Plowman's Tale, the twenty-five manuscripts which add the Tale of Gamelyn as the CkT, and the two manuscripts, Ad[1] and En[3], which add Lydgate's Siege of Troy as the last of the Canterbury Tales. Ha[3] shows its dogmatic preoccupation in its revisions and excisions of objectionable parts of the tales. Jean of Angoulême's Ps indicates its generic and stylistic concerns by the omission of displeasing tales and

the editorial corrections and alterations to suit the noble taste. More detailed instances of scribal reactions to, and interest in, individual tales from the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> follow in this chapter.

[20]J. S. P. Tatlock and A. G. Kennedy, <u>A Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and to the Romaunt of the Rose</u> (Washington, 1927) proves the many uses to which Chaucer put the expression "in sondry wyse" and the term "sondry."

[21]That the art of story telling is an ordering principle in Fragment VII is cogently argued in Alan T. Gaylord, "<u>Sentence</u> and <u>Solaas</u> in Fragment VII of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>: Harry Bailly as Horseback Editor," <u>PMLA</u> 82 (1967), 226-235. Therein he states that "the shape of the whole of F VII, or, more accurately, the shape of the ideas and themes which hold it together, seems to me controlled by a single, though admittedly very broad subject: <u>the art of story telling</u>" (p. 226). Moreover, if Fragment VII properly belongs, as its alias B^2 indicates and as Robert A. Pratt demonstrates in "The Order of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>," <u>PMLA</u>, 66 (1951), 1141-1167, after Fragment II (B^1), then, together with the other references in Fragments I and II, there is every reason to believe that the art of story telling is indeed an ordering principle of the entire <u>Canterbury Tales</u>.

[22]The focus of this study on scribal interpretations of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>, as implied by their selection and transmission of certain tales in numerous texts and contexts, is just one approach to an appreciation of Chaucer's narrative art. The more frequently used approaches are comparisons among the tales themselves and comparisons of the tales with their sources or analogues.

[23]For definition and examples of the exemplary figure, see Ernst Robert Curtius, <u>European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages</u>, trans., Williard R. Trask (1953; rpt., New York and Evanston, 1963), pp. 59ff, 81, 95, 98f, 110, 114n, 118, 120, 179, 362-364, 549f.

[24]Numerous examples of the medievalization of Boethius' <u>Consolation of Philosophy</u> into a consolation of religion are found in two unpublished type scripts of Dr. Richard A. Dwyer: "The Appreciation of Handmade Literature"; <u>Boèce de Confort: A Study of Medievalization by Narrative</u>.

[25]M-R, I, pp. 190, 341.

[26]M-R, II, p. 49.

[27]M-R, I, pp. 190-191.

[28]Martin M. Crow, "Unique Variants in the Paris Manuscript of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales," The University of Texas Studies in English, No. 16 (Austin, 1936), p. 18.

[29]Crow, p. 27; the lines are A1474, A1793, and A2603.

[30]In the standard text, "romen" occurs in the following lines: A1065, A1069, A1071, A1099, A1113, and A1119.

[31]See OED, mew, V.^{3} with suggestive sense of V.^{2}.

[32]On most scribes' general view of a text, Kane says, "Scribes did not see their alterations in any large relation to one another. Their view of the copy seems generally to have been limited to the single line, and seldom to any appreciably larger unit." Kane, p. 145.

[33]See Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, pp. 175-190; Ruggiers, pp. 151-166; The Chaucer Review, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1968) devotes its entire issue to the KnT.

[34]McCormick, p. 557.

[35]M-R, I, p. 378.

[36]David Laing, "Notice of an Old English Manuscript in the Royal Library at Naples," in Reliquiae Antiquae: Scraps from Ancient Manuscripts Illustrating Chiefly Early English Literature and the English Language, eds., Thomas Wright and James Orchard Halliwell, Vol. 2 (London, 1845), p. 70. For the complete poem, see Henry N. MacCracken, The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, EETS, O.S., 192 (London, 1934), 438-442.

[37]That grave irony is indeed the tone in which these passages were intended is implied by the title and running glosses in several of the Lydgate manuscripts (Bodley Fairfax 16, Ashmole 59, and B. M. Adds. 16165), indicating that the poem speaks "per antifrasim," the envoy of which poem the Np scribe consequently uses to comment on the ClT.

[38]Elizabeth Salter, Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and The Clerk's Tale (London, 1962), p. 64.

[39]Salter, Chaucer, p. 65. It might be added here that a third interpretation, that implied by the Host's and the Merchant's responses, is taken by none of the scribes. This interpretation is the purely bourgeois, secular, realistic viewpoint which sees the tale neither as Petrarch's religious fable nor as the Clerk's ideal standard, but as a reality oft to be wished for between husbands and wives. The Host manifests the same limited view in his response to Melibee.

[40]Florence H. Ridley, The Prioress and Her Critics (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965).

[41]For a thorough description of this manuscript, plus a discussion of the first scribe (Hand A), see Eleanor Prescott Hammond, "Two British Museum Manuscripts (Harley 2251 and Add. 34360): A Contribution to the Bibliography of John Lydgate," Anglia, Neue Folge, 16 (1905), 1-28.

[42]A Catalogue of the Harley MSS in the British Museum, (London, 1808), II, 579.

[43]For more detailed information, see ibid., p. 675.

[44]The same difference in the Ct and Hl^3 versions of the PrT holds for their transmissions of the SNT, eliminating the necessity for a separate discussion later of the SNT as told with significant differences.

[45]For exact contents, see M-R, I, pp. 515, 52.

[46]M-R, I, p. 516.

[47]M-R, I, p. 53. An interesting contrast is the un-interesting corrections of Ar's two readers and the Duxworth-Angoulême team who write and correct the Ps manuscript.

[48]The argument that Pp simply copies from an exemplar in which such an order exists is--except for the absence of mentioned tales in Pp--possible and leads to the interesting fact that only the Hg manuscript has such an order (M-R, I, p. 270; Eleanor Prescott Hammond, review of John Koch, A Detailed Comparison of the Eight Manuscripts of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales completely printed in the Publications of the Chaucer Society (Heidelberg, 1913) in Beiblatt zur Anglia, 25 (1914), 234-239. Given the extremely complex

textual tradition of this tale (M-R, II, p. 371), a Hg
line of ancestry is as probable as any other.

[49]M-R, IV, pp. 214-215; VII, p. 460.

[50]For a complete description, see M-R, I, p. 289 and
the Catalogue of the Famous Library of Printed Books, Illu-
minated Manuscripts, Autograph Letters and Engravings col-
lected by Henry Huth and since maintained and augmented by
his son Alfred H. Huth (London, 1917), III, 1662-1663.

[51]McCormick, p. 543.

[52]McCormick, p. 543; M-R, I, p. 289.

[53]For the earlier discussion of these traditions be-
hind the MkT, see Chapter II, p. 41, 24n.

[54]For a description of contents, see M-R, I, pp. 343-
348 and Hope Emily Allen, Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle,
PMLA, Monograph Series III (New York and London, 1927),
pp. 34-36.

[55]Dempster, "Manly's Conception of the Early History
of the Canterbury Tales," PMLA, 61 (1946), esp. pp. 401-403,
410-411.

V

"THE HOOLE BOOK"

As has become abundantly clear in the preceding chap-
ters, the scribal art of textual transmission manifests
itself in two basic processes: the transmission of a text
and the arrangement of that text in a context. Of the two
processes, in the case of the nineteen manuscripts in this
study, the more interesting and fruitful is the latter
process of compilation. By their transmission of the text,
with whatever editorial addition, alterations, and omis-
sions they made, the scribes of these nineteen manuscripts
have shown their interest and their understanding or mis-
understanding of specific passages in various Canterbury
tales. It is, however, by their arrangement of these tales
into various contexts that they have indicated most clearly
their understanding and appreciation of whole tales. Hence
the importance of responding to the questions posed by
R. H. Bowers:

> . . . do students always pay sufficient
> attention to the total contents of a
> given medieval manuscript, which, as a

> miscellany, may often contain fair scri-
> bal copy of thirty or forty items? And
> may not such attention sometimes provide
> useful clues to the interpretation of a
> particular poem or crux therein?[1]

Just how useful such attention to the context into which
scribes compiled various Canterbury tales has been was
shown in Chapter IV.[2] The next logical step is the subject
of the present chapter. If the total contents of a given
medieval manuscript can provide useful clues to the inter-
pretation of a particular passage or poem, then might they
not be important in themselves and have significance as an
entity, a compilation, a "hoole book"?

The primary fact about every manuscript is, as Falconer
Madan clearly expresses, that "there is this special point
about a manuscript, that any one is unlike every other, is
unique, has a distinct individuality of its own."[3] Further-
more, the unique individuality of each manuscript implies its
own particular coherence, its own configuration, its own
special order and unity, even if that unity is the mere
physical unity of discrete quires bound together in one
codex. What this chapter purposes, then, is to consider
each of the nineteen manuscripts in this study as an entity
produced by the scribal process of compilation, and possess-
ing certain general features as a consequence of such a
process.

Of the many points of view from which manuscripts can be considered--authorship, audience, purpose, paleography--that of their actual contents is the primary focus of this chapter.[4] The nineteen manuscripts of this study are surveyed, therefore, beginning with those the contents of which are most similar and unified, and concluding with those which are most diverse in subject matter.

MSS. Ad[4] and Ct, compiled at the extreme limits of the fifteenth century, respectively in circa 1400 and 1490, represent the simplest, most homogeneous compilational unity. Ad[4] is basically one work, Chaucer's translation of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, followed by two afterthought verses on the back vellum flyleaves--the Parson's description from the General Prologue and "Truth" with the unique copy of the Envoy. The Ad[4] manuscript, which contains basically only one work, manifests the same principle of unity as that which dominates the printed book culture and which characterizes the majority of books, namely, the selection of one work with a preface and/or a conclusion by the author or some related authority.[5]

The Ct manuscript bears witness to the strong hagiographic tradition in Middle English literature and represents an anthology of the lives of Mary and her saints. Beginning with a five-folio detailed table of contents, the manuscript

contains, in order: Lydgate's "Life of Our Lady" and Chaucer's two Canterbury tales about Saints (SNT and PrT), all three texts copied from 1484 editions of Caxton's books; Lydgate's lives of St. Margaret and of St. George, both texts featuring the crushing of dragons; Lydgate's lives of St. Edmund and St. Fremund, both English kings; and, some concluding religious lyrics, an eight-stanza prayer to St. Edmund for Henry VI and a seven-stanza poem to Mary entitled "Stella Caeli Extirpavit." Like the Ad[4] manuscript, Ct is copied by one scribe; the scribe identifies himself as William Cotson in three separate places;[6] and, there is the further attribution in a front-cover nineteenth-century hand copy of what seems to be an earlier inscription stating that, while William Cotson wrote the book, it was "compiled" by John Lydgate.[7]

MSS. Ad[4] and Ct exemplify the most complete and simplest unity to be found in fifteenth-century manuscripts. Their reproduction of one work, or a carefully constructed series of pieces on one subject matter in the hand of one scribe, most closely parallels the homogeneous contents and uniform printing of today's books. But the majority of the nineteen manuscripts of this study reflect generally the content of manuscripts in the fifteenth century in that they possess increasingly diverse compilations of materials. These

manuscripts range from those which possess a unity and arrangement characteristic of present day anthologies, through those manuscripts in which the variety of contents likens them to miscellanies, to a final group of manuscripts which contain widely diverse and random material and are known as commonplace books.

MSS. Ha^1 and Ll^1, although each written by several scribes, are compiled for intended patrons and represent a type of private anthology. Ha^1 is a Chaucer anthology completed by the Hermit of Greenwich. Consisting exclusively of romances, Ha^1, like Ad^4 and Ct, is the compilation possessing the simplest and most complete order and unity. MS. Ll^1 is an anthology of religion and romance written by two scribes, perhaps Austin Canons, for some patron, perhaps the patron of Hempton (a parish in Norfolk) who later ceded the manuscript to Richard III when still Duke of Gloucester, and whose autograph appears on f. 98b.[8] The first part contains stories of special appeal to the nobility: Lydgate's Siege of Thebes, Chaucer's KnT and ClT, and the prose Ipomedon. The second part, containing biblical paraphrases in verse, and a poem on a mother whose seven boys were martyred, could appeal to the religious responsibility of the same noble class.

Like MSS. Ha^1 and Ll^1, the next set of six manuscripts

are written by several scribes. The mixed character of
their contents, however, suggests classification as miscel-
lanies, collections of diverse materials compiled sometimes
on principles of subject matter or literary form, sometimes
simply on a principle of variousness. MS. Ar is a miscel-
lany, in several hands, of doctrine, travel, romance, and
morality. Its contents include "Ypotys," Mandeville's
"Travels," "The Prick of Conscience," a mutilated "Speculum
Guy of Warwick," a fragment of "The Seven Sages," and a
mutilated <u>Melibee</u>. An over-all ethical concern dominates
the miscellany, but gives way in small measure to ideology,
adventure, and the marvelous in Mandeville's "Travels" and
the "Speculum Guy."

MSS. Ll^2 and Ee are religious miscellanies compiled on
the evident principle of ethical edification. Ll^2 contains
both prose and verse in English and Latin; the volume is made
up of four books. Books I, III, and IV feature devotional
verse; Book II, chiefly in prose, contains nearly all of
Richard Rolle's English works, Hilton's "De Vita Activa et
Contemplativa," Chaucer's <u>ParsT</u>, entitled here as "Prima
pars penitencie," and several doctrinal expository pieces
in Latin. Throughout the manuscript many short verses and
quotations are interspersed where there is room for them.
Ee is a less imposing religious miscellany, containing no

heavily doctrinal item, no Latin, and no prose. Its con-
tents are simply a fragment of Mirk's "Festial," Chaucer's
MLT, a popular fragment of Confessio Amantis entitled "Three
Questions," Lydgate's lives of St. Edmund and St. Fremund,
"The Charter of Fefment of the Sowle," and a legend of St.
Augustine of Canterbury. Manly and Rickert judge Ee to be
composed of several small cheap books, and they speculate
about their being sold separately or bound into one volume.[9]
As a made-up book, with blanks left for subsequent insertion
of pieces, Ee is, like the following two manuscripts, from
a professional shop.

MSS. Hl^2 and Tc^3 are lengthy compilations of religious
and secular poetry. Eleanor P. Hammond has traced and at-
tributed Hl^2 and several other manuscripts to a professional
scribe employed in a scriptorium or publishing house.[10] She
further notices similarities of treatment in compilation
among Hl^2, Tc^3, and another Trinity College manuscript,
R.3.21.[11] Manly and Rickert confirm her suggestions by
stating their opinion that the two MSS. Hl^2 and Tc^3 "were
made by men trained in the shop of John Shirley."[12] Hl^2
and Tc^3 are, therefore, commercial miscellanies, "aureate
collections" as R. H. Robbins describes them,[13] and furnish
a source of information on the scribal art of manuscript
compilation distinct from that gained from the private and

religious anthologies and miscellanies previously discussed
and the commonplace books and diachronic compilations (manu-
script books compiled or assembled over long periods of time)
to be considered later. Both miscellanies have as common
features of compilational process the fact that all the
pieces are in verse.[14] They both open with a prayer to
Christ and both contain pieces on the Kings of England
(Hl^2 at the beginning, Tc^3 at the end), as if to solicit
approval from the two most powerful institutions among their
potential audience. Compilation in each manuscript proceeds
in a loose, topical manner, copying in various arrangements
a series of short love lyrics, a group of Aesopic fables,
a few tales, and some moral verses. Hl^2 has, in addition,
several series of religious tales and verses, as well as
more political poems. The largest sections in both manu-
scripts are their respective treatments of the de casibus
tradition, Hl^2's excerpts from Lydgate's Fall of Princes
and Tc^3's mixture of the same within the structure of
Chaucer's MkT. Both miscellanies share interest in Aesopic
fables, devoting at least ten folios to such verse.

Possessing compilational techniques similar to those
in Hl^2 and Tc^3; namely, selection on the basis of literary
form and compilation in topical sequences, MS. Pp is a
miscellany compiled by five or six scribes, "practised

writers but apparently unaccustomed to copying literary texts," and definitely not professionals in the sense of the scribes who compiled Hl^2 and Tc^3.[15] The Pp miscellany consists of verse and prose in three distinct parts. Part one resembles the random variety of a commonplace book; it contains a mixture of verse and prose ranging from Lydgate's "Complaint of the Black Knight," "Temple of Glass," "Serpent of Division," and Chaucer's "Legend of Good Women," "ABC Poem," "House of Fame," and "Parliament of Fowls," to the "Three Kings of Cologne," a "Letter of Prester John," and "Parvus Cato." Parts two and three, however, manifest the controlled arrangement characteristic of the Hl^2 amd Tc^3 miscellanies. Part two consists exclusively of prose, and compiles all the prose tales and the <u>Retraction</u> from the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>; part three features, exclusively, Chaucer's shorter poems. The Pp miscellany is most like MS. Ar, the first of the miscellanies discussed here. In contrast to Ee and Ll^2, both religious miscellanies, and in contrast to the two commercial miscellanies, Hl^2 and Tc^3, Pp and Ar represent what might well be the typical verse of interest to an educated layman.[16]

Although the next three manuscripts, Hn, Hl^3, and Np, are each written by one scribe, their contents show a greater diversity of material and less order in the arrange-

ment of that material. These three manuscripts represent the commonplace books, those collections of memorabilia, compilations of striking texts and passages in random order.

The Hn compilation is called, by Manly and Rickert, "a 'library' of the usual religious type."[17] Its eight "books," containing various numbers and sizes of quires, show the following general arrangement. Books I and II feature two similar pieces, William Lichfield's "Complaint between God and Man" and a debate of the Four Daughters of God. Books III and IV contain a story of Christ's Passion and Mary's sorrows, followed by six other items on persons and events related to Christ's life. After two and one-half blank folios, Book V contains a "travel" poem on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In Book VI are the two selected Canterbury tales, <u>Mel</u> and <u>MkT</u>, which tales relate less to the foregoing pilgrimage poem than to the following moral piece which constitutes Book VII: Burgh's <u>Parvus et Magnus Cato</u>. Book VIII concludes the "library" with two Lydgate secular poems, "The Churl and Bird" and "The Horse, Sheep, and Goose," and miscellaneous verse and prose, including tables, receipts, verses on conduct and on mutability.

MS. Hl^3 shows a diversity and topical arrangement similar to that of Hn, but without its terminus in random, miscellaneous items. Described as "a book which a country

parson might have written for himself,"[18] Hl[3] leaves traces
of its process of compilation.[19] The manuscript seems
originally to have been three booklets: ff. 1-86 containing
a defective version of Lydgate's "Life of Our Lady" and a
pre-Lydgatian "Assumption of Our Lady"; ff. 97-108 contain-
ing the PrT and the SNT; and ff. 109-120 containing a poem
on Erasmus martyr and the B-text of "The Charter of Christ."
The scribe then seems to have added a quire of slightly
smaller paper which constitutes ff. 121-129 and includes
the tale of the Child of Bristow, a Latin quatrain, and the
"Prophecy of Merlin." Finally, he found a verse prayer to
Mary and Lydgate's "Testament," decided they should follow
the two items in ff. 1-86, inserted after f. 86 a quire of
the smaller paper, began to copy, failed to finish the two
items before f. 97, and, consequently, continued Lydgate's
"Testament" on other vacant pages, 108ab, ending on 128b-129b.

The last of the three manuscripts, classified as
commonplace books, is MS. Np, a compilation of an amateur
scribe named More.[20] After ten folios of medical receipts
More compiles, on the remaining sixty-two folios, five ro-
mances including Sir Bevis of Hampton, Saint Alexis of
Rome, Libeaus Desconus, a fragment of Sir Isumbras, and the
ClT, occasionally punctuated by More's own doggerel verses
and the borrowed verse of a better versifier.

The remaining six manuscripts are all diachronic compilations, manuscripts either passed from owner to owner over many generations and copied in until filled, or several manuscripts copied by many and bound together at a later date. Among the separate parts that constitute these manuscripts the unity that inheres is often only the physical unity of being bound together in one volume.

MSS. Ph^4 and Ra^4 are compilations of several booklets, miscellanies resulting from binding together several smaller manuscripts instead of copying from other manuscripts. Ph^4 consists of two separate booklets, each an anthology of mostly religious and moral pieces, but each containing a romance. The first booklet, moreover, consists entirely of poems by Chaucer and Lydgate copied in five different hands; the second booklet contains predominantly religious poetry and prose. A William Turnar apparently bound together the two original anthologies.[21] Ra^4 is a miscellany of thirty-five pieces bound together from five original booklets. Various glosses and marginal notes indicate successive scribes and owners of the various booklets;[22] its contents of moral and religious verses, medical receipts, secular and satirical verses, romances, and historical poems reflect the same extreme variety of arrangement as that most usually found in commonplace books.

MS. St consists of four paper folios containing a sixteenth-century poem entitled "The Quantitey of the Earth" appended to a sixty-three folio, vellum, fifteenth-century anthology of religious and didactic verse compiled by a well-educated amateur and including "The Three Kings of Cologne," _Melibee_, "Abbey of the Holy Ghost," and a poem entitled "Parce mihi Domine."[23]

MS. Sl[3] shows a similar yoking of a 375 folio seventeenth-century miscellaneous collection of papers, including novels, parts of plays, tracts, letters, poems, lists, bills, and recipes to an original sixty-one folio fifteenth-century religious anthology, much like MS. Ll[2].[24] Both MSS. St and Sl[3] represent volumes composed as separate compilations, compounded and bound together by a later owner, most likely Dr. Hans Sloane, in the case of Sl[3].

MSS. Kk and Hl[1] range over three and four centuries in their compilation of the most random and disparate contents. Mostly in paper, but with several vellum leaves, Kk includes speeches, letters, and verses concerning the Earl of Essex in the 1590's, a twenty-one folio treatise on alchemy, a forty folio history of Ireland by Edmund Campion, and many more religious, legal, political, and historical pieces--all in many hands from the three distinct centuries. Hl[1] is less random in its compilation into four distinct parts.

The first consists of twelve vellum leaves containing a fourteenth-century text entitled "Leges Edwardi." The second part is a fifteenth-century collection of religious verse and prose in which the PrT is copied as a tale of God's mercy and titled "Alma Redemptoris Mater." The third and fourth parts contain seventeenth-century texts, Secretary Naunton's "Fragmenta Regalia, or Observations on Queen Elizabeth, Her Times and Favorites," and some boy's copybook of verses, alphabets, drawings, and a few legal forms.

It is evident, from the foregoing survey of the nineteen manuscripts in which one or more of the Canterbury Tales have been excerpted for compilation, that, just as in the previous chapter wherein it was seen that the context did not always elucidate the text, entire manuscripts vary greatly in the degree of unity which they exhibit. Manuscripts, such as Ad^4 and Ct, show not only a likeness of parts but also an order among them. Other manuscripts, such as Ha^1 and Ll^2, show simply a similarity of contents on several counts, while those like Hl^2 and Tc^3 possess, often, only one principle of selection and compilation. Finally, the majority of manuscripts seem to exhibit merely the principle--if it may be called a principle; that is, a determinant factor in compilation--of variety, so that

whatever unity they possess is the bare physical unity of being bound together. However, even when the sum of a manuscript's parts adds up only to many separate parts, the fact that the manuscript has transmitted and preserved them is alone significant and helpful in appreciating each part. For, although there may not exist in any given manuscript an intimate relationship among its many pieces, that each piece has been considered valuable enough to be copied and preserved is important. Moreover, the configurations of the various manuscripts into which any one piece has been compiled give multiple perspectives on its importance as well as its meaning.[25]

NOTES

[1]R. H. Bowers, "The 'Suttell and Dissayvabull' World of Chaucer's 'Troilus,'" N & Q, N.S. 4 (1957), 278.

[2]In her study, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1968), Rosemary Woolf often uses the manuscript context of a poem as a valuable aid to interpretation. About it she says, "The reading of lyrics in their manuscripts, however, is a valuable exercise for they often then give an impression very different from that which they give in modern anthologies. The manuscript context of the lyrics is one of the clearest indications of how they were regarded in the Middle Ages" (p. 376).

[3]Falconer Madan, Books in Manuscript: A Short Introduction to their Study and Use. With Eight Illustrations, 2nd ed., revised (London, 1920), p. v.

[4]For some basic classifications of manuscripts, see Eleanor P. Hammond, Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual (1908; rpt., New York, 1933), pp. 52-53; Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (Oxford, 1952), pp. xvii-xxxiii; Rosemary Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages, pp. 373-376.

[5]Commenting on religious lyrics in their manuscript context, Rosemary Woolf notes a similar principle of compilation as that just described in Ad[4]: "As manuscripts came to be owned by the laity, lyrics were often included as appendages to vernacular prose texts. In two manuscripts, for instance, 'Crist makiþ to man a fair present' follows Richard Rolle's Form of Perfect Living;[7] [7. See Brown xiv, p. 273.] in MS. Douce 322 'Syth þat ye list to be my costes' immediately precedes the fifth chapter of the Horologium sapientiae and the Boke of the Craft of Dying" (Woolf, p. 375). This type of manuscript compilation is also discussed by R. H. Robbins under his classification of "Fly-leaf Poems," Robbins, Secular Lyrics, p. xxx.

[6]M-R, I, pp. 82, 84.

[7]The full inscription is: "This boke was compiled [in VIII Henrici VI] by Dan John Lydgate Monke of Burye and writen by the hondis of William Cotson [de Dunstaple] Canonicus to the honoure lawde and worshippe of almighty Godde and of owre Blessid lady his moder and all the saynts whos lyvis shall folowe as hitte shall be shewyd so-as hitte is chaptord Script. 1485-1490." The portions between square brackets are inserted above the line in the same hand. M-R, I, p. 84.

[8]M-R, I, pp. 341-342.

[9]M-R, I, pp. 127-128.

[10]Eleanor P. Hammond, "Two British Museum Manuscripts (Harley 2251 and Adds. 34360): A Contribution to the Bibliography of John Lydgate," Anglia, Neue Folge, Band XVI (1905), 1-28; "Ashmole 59 and Other Shirley Manuscripts," Anglia, 30 (1907), 320-348; "The Nine Syllabled Pentameter Line in Some Post-Chaucerian Manuscripts," MP, 23 (1925), 129-152, esp. p. 130; "A Scribe of Chaucer," MP, 27 (1929), 27-33.

[11]Hammond, "A Scribe of Chaucer," p. 33.

[12]M-R, I, p. 534; see also R. H. Robbins, Secular Lyrics, p. xxv and Hammond, "A Scribe of Chaucer," pp. 27-28.

[13]R. H. Robbins, Secular Lyrics, pp. xxiii-xxvi.

[14]The one exception is Tc^3's concluding prose "The Petigrew of England," ff. 248-252.

[15]M-R, I, p. 407.

[16]For a similar estimate, see R. H. Robbins, "The Findern Anthology," PMLA, 69 (1954), 611, 628.

[17]M-R, I, p. 292.

[18]M-R, I, p. 247.

[19]My reconstruction of the compilation is based on that in M-R, I, p. 246.

[20]M-R, I, p. 376.

[21]M-R, I, p. 407.

[22]M-R, I, pp. 472-475.

[23]M-R, I, pp. 519-521.

[24]M-R, I, pp. 515-518.

[25]For a similar viewpoint which, however, focuses on the compiler instead of on that which is compiled, see William Matthews, "Inherited Impediments in Medieval Literary History," in Medieval Secular Literature: Four Essays, ed. William Matthews, No. 1, U.C.L.A. Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965), 1-24. In this article Matthews states: "Even the collections of exemplary stories reveal, in their selection, arrangement, proportions, emphases, and style, the minds and tastes of the compilers" (p. 11).

RETRACTION

As manifestly and variously shown throughout this study, in transmitting texts and compiling manuscript books the scribes of the nineteen manuscripts containing selected Canterbury tales are indeed practitioners of an art. While theirs is certainly not the art of creation, it is an art of reproduction, which, if for the most part an art of repetition, is at times an art of interpretation, and, in rare instances, an art of recreation. The object of this study has been to examine aesthetic consequences of the scribal art which these men have practised in transmitting texts. The scribes whose texts are treated in this study represent a valuable minority from the total number of scribes who transmitted the Canterbury Tales; valuable because by their selection, transmission, and arrangement into various contexts of only certain tales from the Canterbury Tales, they have expressed or implied meanings and interpretations which are hidden and ir- retrievable in the majority of manuscripts which transmit the entire Canterbury Tales. Yet, neither these scribes,

nor this study of the artistic effects of their transmitted texts offer more than very limited contributions to the understanding of Chaucer's conception and design of the Canterbury Tales. Like the tantalizingly promising, yet incomplete structures of many medieval cathedrals, the Canterbury Tales continues to elude our full understanding, but never ceases to pique our curiosity and inspire our study.

What limited contribution this study does make toward an understanding and appreciation of the Canterbury Tales is that, at least for the minority of scribes represented here, the Canterbury Tales are not considered as an inviolable organic whole. Nor do these scribes show any sense of a dramatic principle controlling and ordering the tales. They do, however, both in their textual transmissions and in the contexts of the compilations, indicate a sense of other unities, other principles of order and arrangement, other interpretive concerns. They do, without any doubt, show primary and almost exclusive interest in the Canterbury Tales as tales rather than as utterances of dramatis personae who command prime attention.

While the meaning of the Canterbury Tales as expressed or implied by these scribes' textual transmissions is, indeed, not as rich as it must have been to Chaucer himself;

it is most likely this meaning which obtained for the majority of Chaucer's medieval public. In this sense, the results of the present study serve as a healthy corrective to current interpretations of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> which are products of either a modern sensibility or an over-sophisticated, overimaginative, vicariously recreated medieval sensibility, and which rely too little on the realities of literary production in a manuscript tradition.

Finally, the thrust of this study has aimed at placing priority emphasis on the actual conditions of medieval literary production. As exhibited in this study's control group of nineteen manuscripts, attention to all the trans-mitted texts of a given work establishes perhaps the firmest, most basic foundation for the understanding and interpreta-tion of medieval texts. In the context of the scribal art of textual transmission and manuscript compilation, medieval literature is seen in its lively, fluid, on-going process. The fullest and most authentic appreciation of medieval literature--after all due prerequisite scholarship--awaits, not in the standard texts or even in the critical editions by themselves, but rather in the rich variety of its manu-script tradition where such literature was first recorded, then transmitted, and exists most completely preserved to this day.

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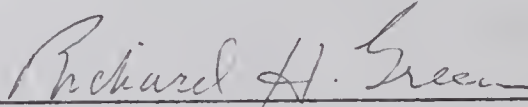School District in Saint Louis County, Missouri.

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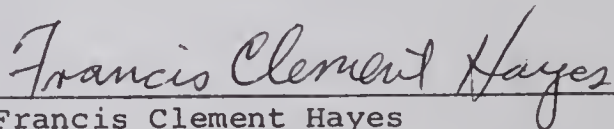
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